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THE

Exiſtence and Attributes of GOD

Not demonſtrable *à Priori*.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

Exiſtence and Attributes of GOD

Not demonſtrable *à Priori*;

In Anſwer to the Arguments of

The Learned Dr. CLARKE, and his Followers:

And more particularly, to a late Pamphlet,

INTITLED,

The Argument à Priori *&c. ſtated and conſider'd.*

By THOMAS KNOWLES, B.A.

of *Pembroke-Hall* in *Cambridge.*

CAMBRIDGE,

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MDCCXLVI.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

The Honorable and Reverend

Mr. *HERVEY*,

Prebendary of *ELY*.

SIR,

IT is a complaint, as juſt as it is common, that the uſual forms of Dedications are no leſs fulſom and indecent, than they are falſe and diſagreeable; that they beſpeak the perſon who offers them a flatterer, and that they brand the character of him, who believes or accepts of them, with vanity.

To

To avoid theſe general cenſures therefore, I will venture to ſtep ſomewhat out of the common road, and will only aim at plain truth; that I may not omit what is proper to be ſaid, and that you may not be diſguſted at hearing what may ſeem improper to be heard. — Encomiums indeed above the reach of human nature may juſtly appear inſipid to a prudent Patron, but thoſe, in the mean time, that are beneath his merits, will be condemned as unbecoming a grateful Client. — Although you will not allow me therefore to enumerate every thing amiable in your character, yet I may be permitted (it is but doing juſtice to your deſerts) to mention your integrity without diſſimulation, and your ſincerity without vain oſtentatious ſhow: but

I will

I will only mention them; for to enter upon the particular inſtances thereof, would be to upbraid the world with the want of obſervation, or to offend that native modeſty, which adds a luſtre to every other virtue.—I ſhould be unpardonable however, if I ſhould omit this opportunity of making a public and grateful acknowledgement of the great obligations, which you have been pleaſed to lay upon,

SIR,

Your moſt obedient,

humble ſervant, —

Thomas Knowles.

THE

Exiſtence and Attributes of GOD

Not demonſtrable *à Priori.*

THE argument *à Priori*, concerning the being and perfections of God, has been repreſented as a point of the greateſt importance to morality and religion, and accordingly it has engaged the thoughts of the moſt learned in the defence of it: but ſo uncertain is the foundation, and ſo inconſiſtent are the conſequences drawn from it, that it has forced its moſt able advocates, upon every difficulty that ſtarted, to endeavour to make ſophiſtry paſs for what they call *demonſtration*, and ambiguities for plain and undeniable truths. In proportion as men miſtook in their conceptions of the exiſtence of the Deity, or of his incommunicable perfections, they have more or leſs groſly miſapprehended the nature and foundation of his exiſtence; and ſometimes by too fond an indulgence of conjecture have run into refinement; at others, by too wanton an enquiry after ſome *firſt principles*, they have withdrawn our

minds from thoſe, that were the only *certain ones.*

The word *Neceſſity*, has been conſidered under all the ſignifications that fancy could invent, in order to apply it to a purpoſe, to which neither a ſuppoſed *eternity*, nor a chimerical *antecedency* could in any wiſe make it applicable; and the exiſtence of the Deity has hereby been put upon ſuch a foundation, as will conclude, at beſt, for a blind *fatality*, or an *infinite ſeries.*

Enough indeed has been already offered by ſeveral learned hands to convince theſe obſtinate gainſayers of the fallacy and bad tendency of their tenets; but not enough to perſuade them to deſiſt from the defence of that, which they muſt plainly perceive before this time to be entirely indefenſible. — To *have the laſt word* (according to their proverbial expreſſion) ſeems to them to carry victory along with it: and whilſt they think themſelves unanſwered in any one point, they continue triumphant upon the whole. With this view, I imagine, there hath lately appeared a pamphlet intitled, *The Argument à Priori &c. ſtated and conſidered*, which confidently promiſes the greateſt ſatisfaction to thoſe, who have before eſpouſed theſe principles,

and

and boldly aſſerts the invalidity of all thoſe objections, which have ever been produced by others in oppoſition to this reaſoning, or which the Author himſelf could *honeſtly frame againſt it.*

As a review therefore of this ſubject can never be unſeaſonable, and as this Author's ſentiments, though handled after a new manner, appear to be repugnant to our moſt rational conceptions of the Divine exiſtence, I was induced to make the following remarks upon them. I have confined myſelf indeed more particularly to reflections upon what *he* has advanced, but have nevertheleſs taken in the whole of *Dr. Clarke's Scheme*, and all along conſidered the ſubſtance of what his *followers* have propoſed in favour of it. And in the courſe of this examination, I have not only endeavoured to invalidate *their* opinions, but have alſo ventured to throw in ſomething in defence of our *own:* leſt by ſhewing the falſeneſs of their principles, and neglecting to ſhew the truth of ours, men ſhould be inclined to ſuſpect that both are equally indefenſible.

As it is the faireſt way, ſo I preſume it will be moſt agreeable to the reader to ſet down the Author's own words at length, and to ſubjoin my anſwers to them, as I go along. But

before I begin, I would inform him, that theſe remarks were at firſt drawn up with a private deſign, and without any thought at that time of having them made public: but the approbation which they have met with from ſeveral perſons to whoſe judgment I could not forbear paying a great deference, and the earneſt deſires of ſome particular friends, have prevailed with me to publiſh them. Whether the performance be equal to the goodneſs of the deſign or not, every one is to determine impartially for himſelf. Certain it is, that this argument deſerves a fair examination; and if what I have advanced will put others upon thinking further of it, or is ſufficient to bring the controverſy to any reaſonable iſſue, I ſhall have my end.

§. 1. " All truths have a neceſſary *founda-*
" *tion* in the nature of things; and though
" they may demonſtrate to us, one the other, in
" the way of argumentation; yet are they
" equally and independently *true* and *neceſſary*.
" *Truth* cannot depend upon any *prior cauſe*
" or *being*, but is itſelf *neceſſary* in its own na-
" ture; *abſolutely* and *independently*, as of our
" exiſtence or conception, ſo alſo of the *will*
" of God himſelf. Thus alſo the exiſtence of

God

" God is *neceſſary truth*; a *fact* in the neceſ-
" ſary nature of things: and whereas all *other*
" facts are by their natures, *contingent* and *de-*
" *pendent* on the will of ſome being; *this* fact,
" and *this alone*, partakes of the nature of
" *truth*, and is itſelf ſtrictly *neceſſary*." P. 2, 3.

Anſwer; All that our Author contends for, throughout the whole, is the poſſibility of an *eternal antecedent neceſſity*, the ground and cauſe of all other things, itſelf uncauſed: he therefore endeavours, in the firſt place, to ſhew how far the nature of truth will admit of ſuch a neceſſity as this, and how much our conceptions of truth itſelf require it: for if he can make it appear, that truth would fall without ſome ſuch *foundation* as this, and that the exiſtence of the Deity is a truth of this ſort, which ſtands in need of the *like* ſupport, he will eaſily make a further uſe of theſe *poſtulata*, and find occaſion too for a *foundation* of that exiſtence, the truth of which, he before ſuppoſes, could not be maintained without the ſame *foundation*. But if we can prove that there is really no ſuch *antecedent neceſſity* at all; and that it is incompatible with the nature of truth, and intirely inconſiſtent with the being and perfections of God, we ſhall ſufficiently expoſe the weakneſs

of this way of reaſoning, and the bad tendency of this new doctrine. In order to the effecting of which, we may obſerve, that by the *neceſſity of truth*, ſo often talked of, is only to be underſtood a certain connection of our ideas, *i. e.* that every intuitive truth is what it is, without any prior cauſe: but this is only a *conſequential neceſſity*; a reaſon indeed to us, whereby we may be able to diſtinguiſh it from any other truth, but does not, in the leaſt, affect its own nature. Our aſſent to it alſo is *neceſſary*; but this neceſſity is only a conſequence of the intrinſic evidence of it: it carries conviction along with it, as ſoon as it is propoſed to us; and we find it impoſſible to withſtand that conviction, without bidding defiance to our ſenſes, and contradicting even reaſon itſelf.—It is moreover *independent* and *eternal* *, but

* This is called an *hypothetical neceſſity* and *eternity*. *Eſſay on Moral Obligation*, p. 11. *Puffendorf*'s *Law of Nature*, B. 1. c. 2. §. 6. *Lock*'s *Eſſay on Human Underſtanding*, B. 4. c. 11. §. 14.---In the ſame ſenſe *Plato* calls our ideas, *æterna quædam & νοητὰ rerum corporearum exemplaria*; and *Alcinous* obſerves (*cap.* 9.) Ὁριζονται δὲ τὴν ἰδεάν, παράδειγμα τῶν κατὰ φύσιν ἀιωνίου. By which words, *æterna* and αιωνίου they could mean nothing more, than that our ideas of things were probably *commenſurate* with the exiſtence of the things themſelves: they could not however intend to ſtrain the meaning of the

only in this reſpect, *viz.* that it cannot be altered or diverſified, leſſened or increaſed by the different conceptions of men, or by the difference of their underſtandings. When things are once brought into exiſtence, and conſtituted in ſuch and ſuch a manner, agreements and diſagreements, wherein *truth* conſiſts, flow neceſſarily from their reſpective conſtitutions; and ſomething might always have been affirmed or denied of them, whether we ever perceived it or not. Thus, the equality of the numbers, 2 and 3 to 5; and the relation of proportion between 1 and 4; and 4 and 16, do neceſſarily and eternally belong to thoſe reſpective numbers, and truth is neceſſarily and eternally included in them, whether any propoſitions or concluſions be formed about them or not. This ſprings from the ſame *neceſſity of nature*, which makes the three angles of a triangle equal to two right ones; or that fixes a certain and immutable proportion between a cone and a cylinder of the ſame height and baſe: but will any one ſay, that this is an *an-*

the words ſo far, as to imagine, that what they looked upon but as exact *copies*, could be antecedent to the *originals* from whence they were drawn.---Vid. *Cic. Acad.* 1. 8. & *Tertullian. de Animâ*, c. 18.

tecedent neceſſity, (the only one which we are concerned with in the preſent debate?) does it not rather commence after the exiſtence of the ſubjects has begun, and then, derive its nature from theirs? the things themſelves could never have exiſted without a divine mind, nor this neceſſity without ſome preceding prædicates; to make this *neeeſſity* therefore, which muſt needs be ſubſequent both to the divine will, and to the things which owe their origin to it, *antecedent* to both of them, even when it is *nothing* without them, is the moſt palpable ὕϛερον πρότερον, that can poſſibly be imagined.

Again, when our author endeavours to point out a difference between this *truth* of *God's neceſſary exiſtence*, and other *truths*, which relate to the exiſtence only of *contingent beings*, and accordingly maintains that theſe *latter are properly and ſtrictly ideal*, it is evident that he has but an imperfect and partial conception of what truth is: for we may obſerve that truth, (when applied only to *contingencies*,) is either of *words*, or *ideas*, or *things*: *verbal truth* is their conformity to one or both of the other two: *ideal truth* is the agreement or diſagreement of ideas: and *truth of things* is the relative nature of things themſelves; or the agreement or diſ-

agreement

agreement of one thing with another; from whence others have deduced a fourth ſort, called *metaphyſical* or *tranſcendental truth*, which takes place, when the real exiſtence of things is conformable to the ideas, which we have annexed to their names: but it is plain, that in every acceptation of the word, it is *relative*, and only the conſequence of the exiſtence of things, even as their exiſtence is of God's determination. In like manner, (for our author draws the parallel between one and the other) the exiſtence of God is a *neceſſary truth*: not demonſtrable *à priori*, which, as we ſhall ſhew afterwards, is impoſſible and contradictious; but by neceſſary inferences from principles altogether undeniable *; *i. e.* it always has been, is, and will be true, that whenever a man contemplates the works of the creation, he can never ſtop till he finds the neceſſity of a Creator; but to call it a *neceſſary fact*, in his acceptation of the words, is the ſame as to ſay, that God was compelled by a ſuperior force, and againſt his will to exiſt: for the words ἀνάγκη and *neceſſity* have been much uſed by Philoſophers in this hard ſenſe: the Fathers

* *Vid.* Preface to *Cudworth*'s *Intellectual Syſtem.*

(ſays

(ſays Dr. *Waterland*) underſtood by neceſſity, outward force or compulſion, which cannot be aſcribed to God *.

But although we ſhould go ſo far, as to indulge our author in thus perverting the meaning of the word *neceſſity*; and when perverted, let us ſuppoſe that it is, under this diſguiſe, in ſome meaſure applicable to truth; yet we ſhall find, that the remaining part of his principles is clogged with intolerable and impious inconſiſtencies: for this neceſſity is not the *ſubſtance* itſelf, to which it is applied; that would be to make God the cauſe and foundation of his own exiſtence, which is impoſſible †: It cannot be reckoned by him as a *property* or *attribute*; for this muſt be *conſequent* to the ſubject in the order both of nature and of our ideas: and to ſay, that it is *antecedent*, is contrary to our moſt rational idea of the firſt cauſe, and utterly deſtroys our conceptions of his eternity ‡: for we muſt, in conſequence of this, aſſert,

* Vid. *Waterland*'s Sermons at Lady *Moyer*'s Lectures, and his Preface to them.

† *Nec invenitur, nec eſt poſſibile, quod aliquid ſit cauſa efficiens ſui ipſius, quia ſic eſſet prius ſeipſo, quod eſt impoſſibile.* *Vid.* Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Art.* 2. Q. 3.

‡ *Si aliquod eſſet principium Deo prius, ille nequit eſſe æternus: ipſa enim æternitas intrinſeca dicit negationem principii.*

that we have found out a cauſe, which is *prior* to the *firſt*, and *ſuperior* to the *ſupreme*; the bare mention of which abſurdities is a ſufficient confutation of them. So that either the antecedency of this neceſſity muſt drop, and then the argument *à priori* will drop with it; or if the antecedency thereof be allowed, the notion of its being a mode or property is deſtroyed, and we are yet to ſeek for a being, whom we may properly call a *firſt cauſe*. And as every cauſe muſt be perfecter than its effect, both in kind and degree, we ſhall be obliged to bereave God both of his natural and moral perfections, and to aſcribe thoſe perfections to blind *fatality* and unmeaning *neceſſity*.

Laſtly, We may here alſo make uſe of the argument, which the Logicians call *ad hominem*: for "Is truth neceſſary in its own na-"ture; and therefore independent of any *prior* "*cauſe?*" For the ſame, nay, much greater

cipii. Ergo, ſi exiſtentia demonſtrari poſſit à priori, *tum primo, Deus non eſſet principium primum & prima cauſa, utpote quâ alia cauſa prior eſſet.* 2do, *Hoc principium prius erit vel externum (finale vel efficiens) vel internum (materiale aut formale;) non primum, quia Deus eſt finis ultimus; non ſecundum, quia tum eſſet effectus. Nec materiale aut formale, ſumma enim Dei ſimplicitas eas cauſas non admittit; ergo nulla eſt cauſa.* Biſhop *Barlow*'s Exerc. Metaph.

reaſon

reaſon we aſſert, that the *firſt cauſe* can ſtand in need of none, will not admit of any: "Is "the exiſtence of God *neceſſary truth*, *neceſſary* "*fact?*" it muſt certainly then be in vain to ſeek after a cauſe of that exiſtence, and abſurd to do it, according to this author's principles, who maintains, that neceſſary truths cannot depend upon any cauſe, and yet ranks this exiſtence (which he imagines muſt depend upon ſome cauſe) under the claſs of neceſſary truths.

§. 2. Being driven however in the proſecution of his ſcheme upon ſuch palpable abſurdities as theſe, of ſuppoſing a *cauſe prior* to the *firſt*, and *ſuperior* to the *ſupreme*, he endeavours to ward off the force of them by obſerving in the next place, that "*this cauſe* is not "*prior* to the *effect* in the *actual* nature of "things, as all cauſes are to their *temporary* "effects; although it be *prior* in the *order* of "our conception, even as *neceſſity* is the *ground* "and *foundation* of all truth, although not "*prior* to any *truth*, but in the *order* of our "conception," *p.* 4, 5. which is again repeated in *p.* 6, and again *p.* 42.

To the ſame purpoſe alſo Dr. *Clarke* obſerves, that "this neceſſity muſt be *antecedent*; "not

" not indeed in time, to the exiſtence of the " being itſelf; becauſe that is eternal: but it " muſt be *antecedent* in the natural order of " our ideas, to our ſuppoſition of its being." *Demon. Prop.* 3.

Anſwer: It is either antecedent, or co-æval, or ſubſequent to the *effect*, (as our author calls it;) for there is no other medium between theſe: now if it is *antecedent*, he will find it impoſſible to apply it to a *firſt cauſe*, who, as ſuch, muſt be *eternal:* if *ſubſequent*, he will be puzzled to make it ſerve the turn of a cauſe at all: and to ſay that it is *co-æval*, is to imagine that very being to exiſt, in order to the proof of whoſe exiſtence this neceſſity is introduced: thus it is in the order of nature; and the order of our ideas requires the ſame ſteps: if we conceive this neceſſity to be *antecedent* to our idea of God, we conceive it as antecedent alſo to our idea of a *firſt cauſe:* if we conceive it as *ſubſequent*, we have the ſame idea of it as of a *property* of that being, to which it belongs, and therefore we imagine the ſubject of this property to have exiſted before; (that is, in his language, we imagine the *effect* of this *cauſe* to have exiſted even before the cauſe itſelf, by which the *effect* is thought to be produced:)

and

and if we imagine them to be *co-æval*, it is plain that we ſuppoſe too, that the effect may exiſt without the intervention of the cauſe, ſince we cannot ſuppoſe that any being owes its exiſtence to another, which had no power to produce any thing before it exiſted itſelf. So that if God exiſted as ſoon as this neceſſity itſelf, it was needleſs to introduce this as a cauſe of his exiſtence; and if he exiſted before it, it is abſurd.

The order of our conceptions, if they are rightly formed, is taken from the real order of nature; and therefore, to talk of a *neceſſity prior* in the order of our conceptions *only*, is either to imply, that our conceptions are not rightly formed, or if they are, that the order of nature is different from them, which is abſurd: for why do we conceive it at all as any thing *prior*, unleſs we thought it neceſſarily to be ſo in the order of nature? contradictions can no more be looked upon as true in our imaginations, than they can be ſo in reality: we cannot ſo far impoſe upon our underſtandings, as to imagine that to be conſiſtent, which we know to be really inconſiſtent; or to ſuppoſe that to be *prior*, which we are certain, both from its own nature, and from the na-

ture

ture of that being, to which it is applied, muſt be *poſterior*.

Dr. *Clarke* proceeds to explain his meaning further by adding that "this neceſſity muſt "*antecedently* force itſelf upon us, whether we "will or no, even when we are endeavouring to "ſuppoſe that no ſuch Being exiſts. For ex-"ample; when we are endeavouring to ſup-"poſe there is no being in the univerſe that ex-"iſts neceſſarily, we always find in our minds "ſome ideas, as of infinity and eternity; which "to remove, is a contradiction in the very "terms."—Do infinity and eternity then force themſelves upon us *antecedently*, after the ſame manner, as he ſuppoſes this neceſſity does? or does this neceſſity immediately ariſe in our minds, when we begin to think of a being, to which we may aſcribe it, after the ſame manner, as theſe attributes of infinity and eternity do? one or other of theſe concluſions muſt neceſſarily reſult from the *Doctor*'s reaſoning: but if the firſt be maintained, we muſt then ſuppoſe the divine attributes to be *antecedent* to the ſubſtance to which they belong; which muſt needs appear impoſſible either in the order of nature, or our conceptions; if the latter, we ſhall put this neceſſity upon the ſame footing with

with the other attributes of God, that is, we ſhall neceſſarily conceive it to be *ſubſequent* to his exiſtence.

And indeed although Mr. *Jackſon* in his defence of Dr. *Clarke*, endeavours to put ſome difference between this and the other divine attributes, making "this prior to the ſubſtance, the other conſequent thereto, becauſe derived from it:" (*Exiſtence and Unity*. p. 37) yet we may oberve, that this neceſſity of nature (if it mean any thing) can be conſidered only as a *property* or *attribute* of the divine being; (as ſhall be ſhewn hereafter;) but an *antecedent property* is altogether as contradictious in terms, as an *antecedent ſubſequence*, or a *ſubſequent antecedency*: for the notion of a property does not take place, till we have firſt ſuppoſed a ſubject, in which it may inhere; and therefore cannot poſſibly be imagined to precede, much leſs to produce that ſubject, whoſe very exiſtence it requires for the ſubſtratum of its own exiſtence. Beſides, a property is only one ingredient, out of many, that make up our complex idea of that being, to which it relates; to make any one property therefore the *cauſe* or *foundation* of that being, is to confound the cauſe with the effect; and when applied to God,

God, it is to require a *præcedent* cauſe of that, which inconſiſtently with their own tenets, our authors grant to have exiſted from *eternity*; and to affirm that that owed its beginning to ſome prior cauſe, (for if it is an *effect*, it muſt be ſuppoſed to have a beginning, and ſomething prior to it too) which, according to their own arguments, had no beginning.

How far *neceſſity* is applicable to truth we have ſeen already: to go farther, and imagine that ſome *antecedent* neceſſity or reaſon may be introduced, will only bring along with it uncertainty and confuſion: for all abſolute truths (ſuch as *axioms*) do not only not ſtand in need of any reaſon, but are alſo obſerved to be obſcured by aſſigning any. By an *axiom* we mean a ſelf-evident truth: to ſuppoſe therefore that it depends upon ſome *antecedent* cauſe, from which it muſt be deduced, is to intimate that it ſtands in need of a proof to aſcertain its truth, or that it wants a reaſon to gain it approbation, at the ſame time that we allow, that we aſſent to it for its own ſake alone, and that our knowlege of its truth is already as certain, as the evidence thereof is intuitive and undeniable.

§. 3. Theſe patrons of *antecedent neceſſity* chuſe rather to plunge themſelves into inſuperable abſurdities, than to receive any rational informations from the objects of ſenſe, and the indiſputable proofs of an omnipotent Creator; our author therefore goes on—" Arguments " *à poſteriori* can only prove God's exiſtence " to be a *truth* or a *fact*; but can never prove " it to be *neceſſary truth* or fact. They do by " no means ſhew the *ground* or *foundation* of " his exiſtence, who muſt nevertheleſs exiſt by " ſome *neceſſary reaſon* or *cauſe*; otherwiſe " his exiſtence is only an *actual fact*, like all " other facts, and will appear to be *contingent*, " nay, rather abſurd." *pag.* 4, 6.—" If there " is no *foundation* of the exiſtence of the Deity, " (ſays Mr. *Jackſon*) he may exiſt, or he may " not" *Exiſtence and Unity, pag.* 99.

Anſwer: Is not this ſtraining at a difficulty and ſwallowing an abſurdity? we need only to refer them to their own obſervations of things, and to daily experience: let them but view the frame and ſtructure of this material world; to what is it that they would aſcribe its original?—To *neceſſity?* this muſt needs be contrary to our ideas of agency and contrivance. To *matter* and *motion?* but what could poſſibly

ſibly have been effected by matter and motion, unleſs ſet on work by infinite wiſdom, and ſuſtained in being and operation by almighty power? how could ſuch ſymmetry have aroſe from principles ſo jarring and repugnant? how ſo beautiful a variety and compoſition of things from a mere maſs of confuſion and diſorder? either ſome ſuperior agent muſt neceſſarily be ſuppoſed, or elſe one of the following abſurdities muſt be admitted: *firſt*, The things we ſee muſt have been produced by ſluggiſh matter: or *ſecondly*, They muſt have produced themſelves: or *thirdly*, as *Plato* and *Ariſtotle* held, they muſt be eternal: or *fourthly*, They muſt include a neceſſity of exiſtence within themſelves. Take they which of theſe *hypotheſes* they will, when they come to reaſon upon it, they will ſoon find themſelves entangled with incongruities and impoſſibilities almoſt innumerable.

For to ſuppoſe the firſt (*viz.* that the world was produced by ſluggiſh matter) infers this plain contradiction, *viz.* that it is, and is not what we underſtand by *matter*, at the ſame time: if it is not matter, they give up the queſtion; if it is matter, activity muſt be excluded. "What a ſtrange and miraculous

" thing ſhould we count it (ſays a late *learned* " *writer*) if the flint and the ſteel, inſtead of " a few ſparks, ſhould chance to ſtrike out " definitions and ſyllogiſms? and yet it is alto- " gether as reaſonable, as this ſottiſh opinion " of theſe men, that dead ſenſeleſs attoms can " ever produce life and underſtanding. — Let " them make out how blind matter by undi- " rected motion could at firſt neceſſarily fall " without erring or miſcarrying into ſuch a cu- " rious formation of human bodies: why does " it not exert itſelf after the ſame manner now, " as heretofore? is it bereaved of any of its " original properties? — What ſhape and con- " texture had matter then, which it has not " now? how came it to be altered by long " courſe of time, that living men can no longer " be produced out of putrefaction by the pri- " mary way *? — Matter, when it acts upon matter, (if that expreſſion is allowable) can communicate nothing but motion, and not even that, without the intervention of ſome extrin- ſic principle, by which it is firſt acted upon: this its eſſential inactivity therefore, which ren- ders it incapable of affecting, muſt needs ren-

* Vid. *Bentley*'s Sermons at *Boyle*'s Lectures.

der

der it much more incapable of creating any thing.

The *ſecond Poſition*, (*viz.* that the world produced itſelf,) will evidently ſuppoſe it to act before it exiſted; and that it was and was not, at the ſame time: it was, becauſe an agent in the production; it was not, becauſe to be produced; it was therefore in being, and not in being, which is a manifeſt contradiction.

Nor is the *third*, (*viz.* that of the eternity of the world) leſs inconſiſtent with itſelf: for all the arguments, which either the ancient or the modern Philoſophers have made uſe of are built on ſuch principles, as are falſe and impertinent, and ſuch reaſonings from them as are abſurd and inconcluſive: and not only the moſt preſſing difficulties are on that ſide, on which there are no proofs; but ſhould we go further and deſire theſe modern refiners of the *Ariſtotelian doctrine*, to give us a reaſon, why they ſo obſtinately diſallow of the *beginning* of the world, and to tell us their exceptions againſt it, they could not perhaps give us a better one, than that which *Cicero* gives upon another occaſion, *quis ſic loquitur?* [*Philip.* 3. 9.] *Authority* is the only rule they go by; and that too they follow, without ever examining upon

what reaſon that authority is originally founded. For their ſatisfaction therefore, we will enquire into the merits of the cauſe, and ſhew them upon what weak and infirm grounds they blindly fix their belief; for upon examination we ſhall find that all their arguments may be reduced to the three following:

1. They argue that it is inconceivable that things ſhould ever have been in any other ſtate, than they are at preſent. Now, not to inſiſt upon this being only a *begging of the queſtion*, it will oblige us to condemn many things for falſities, which are evidently true; and to believe many others to be true, which are evidently falſe: for the ſame way of reaſoning will unavoidably lead them to deny even their own production alſo, becauſe they muſt neceſſarily ſuppoſe themſelves in a different ſtate before and after their births.

2. They maintain (*negatively*) that the world was not *generated* as plants or animals are; this, ſays *Ariſtotle*, is altogether ἀσύςατον: and thus far we agree; for neither do we aſſert that it was *generated*; but does this prove it impoſſible for Infinite Power to produce it after ſome other way?—A power of creation is implied

plied in the very notion of a deity *; and therefore it is meer chicanery to argue, becauſe the world could not be *generated*, therefore it could not be *produced*, unleſs any other way of *production* beſides *generation* is proved impoſſible.

3. *Plato* held, that the world flowed from God as rays from the ſun: and *Ariſtotle*, after him, aſſerted, that it is impoſſible that an eternal agent, having an eternal paſſive ſubject, ſhould continue without action: and from this argument he deduces the eternity of the world, as a neceſſary *corollary*.—Now, not to dwell upon the incongruity of *Plato*'s reaſoning, *viz.* That the world was *made*, and yet that it is *eternal*, we may obſerve, that this *hypotheſis* makes the almighty creator a meer machine, in every reſpect like the ſun, neceſſarily diffuſing its goodneſs every way, as ſoon as it exiſted. But there is this vaſt difference between them, that though God be eſſentially and neceſſarily good, yet the communications of this goodneſs are the effects of his *will*, not (like the ſun's) merely of his *nature*: whereas (as a learned author has obſerved) to make the communications of his goodneſs neceſſary *ab extra*,

* Vid. *Grotius* de Veritate Chriſt. Relig. *lib.* 1. §. 7.

and therefore to make the world eternal, that he might always have an object to exerciſe his goodneſs upon, is to take as much off from the infinite perfection and ſelf-ſufficiency of the divine nature, as it would ſeem to flatter his goodneſs. *Vid.* Stillingfleet's *Orig. Sacr.* B. 3.

Further, the queſtion is about a plain matter of fact; and therefore, (like the truth of all other facts) can only be decided by teſtimony and reaſon. Now we have both divine and human teſtimony on our ſide; the one from the writings of *Moſes*, who has given us an exact and beautiful account of every ſtep of the creation; the other from the concurring traditions of the moſt antient nations and the chiefeſt ſects of Philoſophy *; (for *Ariſtotle* arrogating to himſelf the notion of the eternity of the world, as a *noſtrum*, declared that every body, before him, aſſerted the world's creation.) And reaſon alſo favours us, *firſt* becauſe we have no hiſtory, but what bears date long after the time ſettled by us for the beginning of the world †. *Secondly*, The Accounts

* Vid. *Burnet's* Archæolog. *lib.* 2. *cap.* 1. *Grotius* de Veritate Chriſt. Relig. *lib.* 1. *cap.* 7. *Cicero* de Nat. Deor. *lib.* 1.

† *Præterea, ſi nulla fuit genitalis origo*
Terrarum & cæli, ſemperque æterna fuere,

Cur

which we have of the original and progreſs of arts and ſciences, in the ſeveral ages of the world, are convincing proofs that it was not eternal. *Thirdly*, If the world had been eternal, it is ſo corruptible in its own nature, that the whole frame and ſubſtance thereof muſt have been diſſolved long before this time *.—See theſe arguments well urged by Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*, *Serm.* 1.

Cur ſupra Bellum Trojanum *& funera* Trojæ,
Non alias alii quoque res cecinere Poëtæ.
LUCRETIUS, *Lib.* 5.

* *Quare etiam nativa neceſſe eſt confiteare*
Hæc eadem; neque enim mortali corpore quæ ſunt
Ex infinito jam tempore adhuc potuiſſent
Immenſi validas ævi contemnere vires.
LUCRETIUS, *Lib.* 5.

The *Ariſtotelians*, ſenſible of the force of this argument, and willing to evade it, have in conſequence of their firſt principles aſſerted, that the world is *perfect*, and that the frame thereof is not ſubject to any change, nor liable to a diſſolution. But the changes obſervable in the *old ſtars*, and the frequent appearance of ſome *new ones*, is an evident demonſtration of the contrary.---- *Neutiquam fingendum eſt, cælos* incorruptibiles: *corpora cæleſtia, proinde ac terreſtria, ſuas habent viciſſitudines & tranſmutationes; atque ipſæ* fixæ *in* planetas *converti poſſunt, & viciſſim* planetæ, *excuſſis ſordibus, in* fixas *reviviſcere.* *Burnet*'s Archæol. Philoſoph. *cap.* 9.

But

But although the world could neither be produced by ſluggiſh matter, could not produce itſelf, nor was eternal; yet

Fourthly, According to others, it may include a neceſſity of exiſtence within itſelf. But beſides that *ſelf-ſufficiency* directly implies *eternity*, the plain conſequence of this ſuppoſition is, that it is impoſſible to conceive how any thing could have been, or can be otherwiſe than it is at preſent: that it is abſurd to ſuppoſe that there may be more ſtars or planets, more plants or animals: that he who gave us five ſenſes could not poſſibly have given us more at firſt, or cannot take any away from us hereafter. The generally received notion of a *vacuum* muſt, upon theſe principles, be exploded; the *motion* of bodies from one place to another will hereby become impracticable: and the power of *annihilation* aſcribed to God by learned and pious men, a meer fancy and impoſſibility.—See theſe arguments ſtrongly enforced by Dr. *Clarke* in his *Demonſtration of the Being and Attributes of God*, and by Mr. *Wollaſton* in the *Religion of Nature delineated*.

I think I ſcarcely need mention the *Luſus Atomorum* (as Dr. *Clarke* calls it) of *Epicurus*: for whoever can be ſo preverſe, as to attribute thoſe

thoſe things, which are the proper effects of counſel, and the plain workmanſhip of wiſdom to a fortuitous concourſe of dead ſenſeleſs atoms, may as well imagine that a ſet of twenty-four letters may be jumbled together, until they fall out to be an exact poem, or that the accidental careleſs-ſprinkling of oil and colours upon canvas may produce the exact *portraiture* of a man *.

Upon the whole therefore; ſince the preſumed power and agency of matter is ſo groſs an abſurdity; ſince the ſelf production of the world is ridiculous and extravagant; ſince the eternity thereof is loaded with a multitude of inſuperable difficulties, and it's neceſſary exiſtence is attended with conſequences repugnant to the common ſenſe of mankind; ſince the matter ſtands thus, I ſay, we have all the reaſon in the world to think, that without a *creator* there could be no *creature*; and that therefore this proſpect will afford us not only a *probability* but alſo an abſolute *neceſſity* of a ſupreme cauſe: it neceſſarily requires infinite wiſdom and power to contrive and perfect this frame, and no-

* See *Grotius* de Verit. Chriſt. Relig. *l.* 1. *Tillotſon's Serm.* 137. and *Bentley's Serm.* 5. 7.

thing

thing leſs than divine goodneſs to direct and govern it †. This is called the *neceſſity à poſteriori*; and is a name (and indeed it is the only true import of the word, as we ſhall ſee hereafter) intended only to expreſs what reference the *effect* has to its *cauſe*; as, if there are things made, there is a neceſſity of a maker; motion neceſſarily requires an eternal mover; light neceſſarily requires a luminous body ‡.

† "An eternal uſefulneſs of things, an eternal good-"ſenſe cannot poſſibly be conceived without an eternal "wiſdom and underſtanding: but that can be no other "than that eternal and omnipotent God." *Bentley's Serm.* 8.

Tully, though an *Heathen*, could not forbear acknowledge thus much, upon a ſurvey of the univerſe.. *Hæc & innumerabilia talia (cœlum, ſolem, lunam, ſidera, terram, hominem, &c.) cum cernimus, poſſumuſne dubitare, quin his præſit aliquis vel effector (ſi hæc nata ſunt, ut Platoni videtur) vel (ſi ſemper fuerunt ut Ariſtoteli placet) moderator tanti operis & muneris?* Tuſc. Diſput. Lib. 1. c. 28.

‡ *Quamvis inviſibilis eſt ipſe deus, tamen intellectu conſpicitur, velut in Speculo relucens. in hoc mundo tam mirifice condito ac tam mirifice adminiſtrato, cujus licet initium aliquod præceſſerit, & finis ſecuturus ſit, tamen ex hujus opificio perſpicitur conditoris virtus, quæ nec initium ullum novit, neque finem eſt habitura; quin ipſius etiam divinitas, quâ ſemper fuit in ſeipſo ſummus.* Eraſmus *in* Rom. 1. 20.

The ſame thoughts we alſo find delivered by the mouth

of

§. 4. But ſuppoſe nothing *a poſteriori* did exiſt, would the exiſtence of God be the leſs true? ſurely not: "but if no argument but *a* "*poſteriori* could prove the exiſtence of God, "it could not be proved at all, if nothing *à* "*poſteriori* did exiſt; but ſurely it would not "be leſs true, but founded on the higheſt *reaſon* "and *neceſſity*." pag. 5.

Anſwer: It is not the divine exiſtence itſelf, but our knowledge of it, that depends upon the exiſtence of the univerſe. The idea of a creation, we find neceſſarily implies the conſideration of a creator, though perhaps God, who is the cauſe, might have exiſted without pro-

of God himſelf (in order to adapt them to our capacities) to *Moſes* in *Exodus* 33. 23. *And thou ſhalt ſee my back parts, but my face ſhall not be ſeen.* Which diſcovery to *Moſes*, *Maimonides* takes to be the knowledge God gave him of his works and attributes: *viz.* thoſe mentioned *Chap.* 34. 6. and thus *Gregory Nazianzen* expounds it, Ταῦτα γὰρ τὰ θεῦ τὰ ὀπίσθια, ὅσα μετ' ἐκεῖνον, &c. Thoſe things are the back parts of of God, which are after him; whereby he is known, as the ſun is by its image in the water, &c. upon which *Elias Cretenſis* has this ingenious gloſs; "The face of God ſignifies his *eſſence* "before the beginning of the world; and his hinder "parts, his *creation* and *providence* in the government of "the world." See *Patrick*'s Comment. in loc.

ducing

ducing the effect; and therefore our author has very unjuſtly inſinuated as the conſequence of our opinion, that the exiſtence of the Deity is wholly owing to our conceptions of it, or at leaſt, that it is but the conſequence of the exiſtence of other things. What ſcale of beings this *neceſſity* of theirs will place God in, they alone are to anſwer for; but certain it is, that in our way of arguing from effect to cauſe; he muſt be placed at the *top*; independent indeed of theſe effects, with reſpect to the nature of his own exiſtence, but nevertheleſs theſe muſt be taken into our account before we can arrive at any certainty about it: agreeing with truth thus far, that it is ſtill, and immutably the ſame, whether we perceive it or not; but diſagreeing in the other circumſtances of *priority* and *relationſhip*; for in the one, we argue from the things that are made to the conſequences deducible from them, as true; in the other, we argue from the things alſo, but then we conſider them not as the *cauſes*, but as the *effects* of ſome thing elſe. Whatever certainty therefore theſe men may vainly imagine they have arrived at, the caſe is yet with them, as with one that is born blind: for whatever other evidence they may ſeem to have of the neceſſity of the being

of

of a God, they want one the moſt convincing of all, which is, the wonders of an almighty power and incomprehenſible wiſdom conſpicuous in the frame of nature, and the viſible parts of the creation *.

For the creation, as it is an effect, we have ſeen, muſt have a cauſe; and as there cannot be an infinite progreſs of *dependent cauſes*, we are obliged to ſuppoſe a *firſt*, which, as ſuch, muſt be independent of all others, and therefore *neceſſary* in itſelf; for *neceſſity of exiſtence* is only the *negation of any dependence*: and thus the exiſtence of created things again implies not only a cauſe *prior* to them, but one abſolutely *firſt* and *uncauſed*, and that firſt cauſe likewiſe to be *neceſſarily exiſtent* †. And this will ſuggeſt to us another reaſon why neceſſary exiſtence may more properly be conceived without having recourſe to any external cauſe *prior* to it, and that is, the nature of God himſelf, becauſe he is the *firſt cauſe*; for upon this account, he cannot depend upon any foundation and there-

* See this thought expreſſed with great beauty by *Milton*, in the *Epiſode upon Light*, at the beginning of *Book* 3. of *Paradiſe Loſt*.

† See this argument further urged by *Cudworth*, in the *Intellectual Syſtem*.

fore

fore cannot owe his exiſtence, or the modus of it to another, unleſs we can ſuppoſe an effect without a cauſe, that is, ſomething effected by nothing, that is ſtrictly ſpeaking, at the ſame time that it is not effected at all *.

§. 5. But perhaps we ought to forbear— *Tantamne rem tam negligenter?*— do we conſider the importance of the queſtion, or the conſequence of the opinion? do we not defeat our own deſign; and at the ſame time, that we are endeavouring to eſtabliſh the belief of a deity, do we not juſtly incur the charge of atheiſm and infidelity, or at leaſt, do we not pave the way to them? this ſeems to be a perverſe inſinuation indeed, but yet it is what our author does not ſcruple to tax us with; for "to aſſert (*ſays he*) "that God does exiſt *without any cauſe*, or that "there is no *reaſon*, *ground* or *foundation* of "God's exiſtence, ſeems to be the ſame as to "ſay that he does *not exiſt*: for he muſt exiſt "*neceſſarily*, or not at all. So likewiſe, to "affirm that there is no *reaſon* or *ground* for "the *truth* of any propoſition, is the ſame as "to ſay, it is *not true*, or that there is no *reaſon*

* Vid. Bp. *Pearſon* on the Creed. Art. 1ſt. pag. 19.

"for

" for the affirmation, ſince all *truth* is *neceſ-*
" *ſary.*" pag. 7.

Anſwer: This indeed is true with reſpect to contingent beings, or to things that are produced, for they muſt have ſome *cauſe*, and muſt be produced by ſomething: but what neceſſity can there be for a *cauſe*, where there is no *effect*, or what occaſion to ſeek out for a foundation of that, which cannot, conſiſtently with its own independent nature, admit of any foundation? In like manner, what other *reaſon* do we want to affirm that *truth* is *truth*, beſides its own intrinſic evidence? if this is not *ground* enough for our aſſent, all the ſupport and confirmation in the world will not make it appear more plain or true; and if this be enough, why ſhould we trouble ourſelves to go any further?—We grant that God exiſts *neceſſarily*; but withal we affirm, that he exiſts without any *cauſe:* here is therefore a neceſſity, though of a different ſort from what our author would ſuggeſt to us; a *neceſſity*, which is pretended to be the *ſupport* of an *independent*, and the *cauſe* of an *uncauſed* being; and is introduced to render abſolute truths and undeniable axioms, truer, if poſſible, than they are of themſelves, and more convincing, if poſ-

ſible, than their own, which is the utmoſt degree of evidence will make them.

But further, I find it neceſſary, beyond all contradiction, to admit of the belief of a *deity*; nay, I find it abſurd to imagine that there is not ſuch a being as a *Creator*; but at the ſame time, I perceive that there is ſomething in the nature of him, which I cannot comprehend: muſt I then give up my former evidence, which was undeniable, becauſe I cannot take in the whole of what I would underſtand? I might for the ſame reaſon deny the certainty of my own exiſtence, becauſe I am ignorant of the true nature of it before my birth, and have but an imperfect view even of my preſent compoſition. Again, I perceive a neceſſary and inſeparable equality between the three angles of a triangle and two right ones, and know that this *truth* has plain and ſtrict demonſtration on its ſide; ſhall I then neglect this evidence, which is invincible, becauſe I cannot underſtand how it is poſſible, that this ſhould be a *neceſſary truth* long before there were any ſuch things as angles or triangles, or before any propoſitions were formed about them? or, is it a whit the *leſs true*, becauſe I cannot find any *reaſon*, why this equality might not have been

prædicated

prædicated of them, before they were? if ſo, one demonſtration would ſtand in need of another to ſupport it, and the greateſt *certainty* would want ſomething *more certain* to maintain and defend itſelf; which is unintelligible jargon and meer nonſenſe.

§. 6. He goes on — "And although God, "who is by arguments *à poſteriori* proved to "be the cauſe and author of beings, muſt "therefore have exiſted *eternally*, becauſe other-"wiſe he could never have exiſted *at all*; yet "this *eternity* of exiſtence does by no means "ſhew the *cauſe* or *reaſon* of his exiſtence." pag. 7.

Anſwer: Nor do we pretend to aſſign any: for to enquire after a *reaſon why*, or the *cauſe by which* he does exiſt, is to ſuppoſe that we have not as yet arrived at a *firſt cauſe*. He exiſts, we ſay, independently, and ſo ſay they: this independence we prove *à poſteriori*; Dr. *Clarke* proves it from the ſame principles: (*Dem. Prop.* 2.) either therefore the ſame idea may be carried to the next proof, which is the *neceſſary exiſtence*, or elſe ſome new one muſt be introduced, that is different from, or incompatible with independence, and therefore inconſiſtent too with neceſſary exiſtence; that

is, in other words, ſomething, which will render him *dependent* and *temporary*. — It is ſufficient for our limited comprehenſions (at leaſt, it is as much as God has thought fit to reveal to us) to ſay, that *he is*, *becauſe he is*, and that we can gather from the beauty of the univerſe, that he cannot but be: to go higher than this, is to imagine ſomething ſuperior to the ſupreme, and prior to the firſt.

But this hypotheſis, Mr. *Jackſon* replies, will not prove ſo much as the *exiſtence* of the firſt cauſe, and therefore much leſs his *neceſſary exiſtence* and *immutability*. "For if his "exiſtence be determined by nothing, it may "be *temporary*; he may ariſe from nothing, "he may exiſt without any foundation, and "therefore he may be annihilated by nothing."

Anſwer: The whole of this miſtake ſeems to have aroſe from not ſufficiently conſidering the difference between created and non-created beings. All other things indeed that now exiſt were once indifferent either to exiſtence or non-exiſtence, and therefore the agency of ſome ſuperior power was neceſſarily required for their production; but the caſe is not the ſame, with reſpect to God; for as he doth now exiſt, ſo has he always exiſted; he never began; he never

never ſuffered any change; here is no effect, and therefore no cauſe can be demanded.—For once however let us ſuppoſe that ſome cauſe was requiſite; (not that there is any reaſon for ſuch a conceſſion, but only to ſhew the abſurdity of their principles) yet to aſſign neceſſity is only to increaſe the difficulty: for as the *poſtulatum* they go upon is, that every thing requires a cauſe or reaſon of its exiſtence; a cauſe muſt next be required of this cauſe, another of that, and ſo on, without end: whence we ſhall run immediately into that abſurd notion of an infinite ſeries of effects, (a notion, which our adverſaries ſeem to be as deſirous of avoiding, as we are) or elſe, we muſt prudently ſtop at our *firſt* cauſe, and acquieſce in our ignorance of thoſe myſteries, which are by man unfathomable.

§. 7. But as inconſiſtent as this opinion may appear to us, our author nevertheleſs has endeavoured to confirm it by the following very conſiderable reaſon: "for *eternity* is only *a* "*mode* of exiſtence, as *infinity* alſo is; neither "of which will prove that he exiſts *neceſſarily*: "but neceſſity cannot poſſibly be conceived as "*a mode* or *property* of God's exiſtence, like "*eternity* or *infinity*, or the like; for theſe

" relate only to the *manner* of his exiſtence, not " in any reſpect to the *cauſe*. On the other " hand, this *neceſſity* of exiſtence, conſidered " as the *cauſe* or reaſon of God's exiſtence, " does really and moſt evidently prove the ne- " ceſſary eternity and infinity, as well as all " other natural perfections of the firſt cauſe." —*p.* 7, 8. and again *p.* 45. " *eternity* and *in-* " *finity* are *modes only*, and do not imply or " infer *neceſſity* of exiſtence."

Anſwer: What he alleges as a confirmation of God's eternity and infinity, unluckily proves the direct contrary: for let him obſerve how plainly it confutes itſelf: this neceſſity, he ſays, cannot be conceived as a *mode* or *property* of God's exiſtence: and why not?—becauſe then it muſt be conſequent to it, which would not have ſerved his purpoſe of making it a cauſe of it; and conſidered as a cauſe, we have proved before that it cannot be co-æval with it; as a cauſe then, it muſt be antecedent to it; a ſuppoſition, which evidently contradicts the idea of eternity; unleſs he will ſo openly bid defiance to common ſenſe, as to imagine that one eternal being may precede another, or rather, in this caſe, be preceded by a temporary one, and that *eternity* itſelf may be

be exceeded by *time*.—Again, this attribute of eternity, though a *mode only*, implies a negation of any beginning, and therefore an impoſſibility of any cauſe; *i. e.* it infers neceſſity of exiſtence; for the idea of neceſſary exiſtence alſo means only a negation of any cauſe: God, who exiſts neceſſarily, muſt have been from eternity, otherwiſe he would have been brought into exiſtence by nothing; he muſt exiſt to eternity, otherwiſe he will be extinguiſhed by nothing: this, as we ſhall ſee preſently, is but the purport of Dr. *Clarke*'s own reaſoning.

Mr. *Jackſon* however obſerves upon this occaſion, that although we may be able to prove God's eternity without the conſideration of a *foundation*; yet if there was not ſome abſolute neceſſity of exiſtence, which is both the *mode* and *foundation* thereof, he may be finite. *p.* 24. —Now, not to inſiſt upon the abſurdity, which he has both here and elſewhere fallen into, of the ſame thing being a *mode* and *foundation* at the ſame time; which is to ſuppoſe it both *prior* and *poſterior* to the exiſtence of the ſubject, to which it belongs; not to inſiſt upon this, I ſay, we can eaſily prove from the nature of *infinity* itſelf, that the aſſigning of a cauſe or foundation muſt entirely deſtroy our

idea of *that*, as well as of *eternity*; but this conſideration will be more properly reſumed hereafter.

Afterwards our author gives us another reaſon why he imagines that this neceſſity cannot, like eternity or infinity, be conſidered as a *mode* of God's exiſtence, which is, "becauſe the "*modes* of neceſſary exiſtence cannot poſſibly "be *ſubſequent*." *p.* 46. Not *ſubſequent* to what? to the exiſtence, or to one another? can they then be antecedent to the exiſtence? if ſo, what do we apply them to in this ſtate of antecedency? or how do they then, as he affirms in the ſame page they always do, "relate to "*being*, *ſubſtance*, and *exiſtence*," for neither of theſe is ſuppoſed to be yet begun? and if this neceſſity is not ſubſequent to ſome other attributes, how do we come to this at all? Dr. *Clarke*'s method of demonſtration is, to deduce the neceſſary exiſtence from the eternity and independency, before proved: if any modes therefore can claim a priority to the others, eternity and independency ſeem to be more properly placed before neceſſity, than neceſſity before both them and the exiſtence of the being too. But the truth is, they are all equally the partial conceptions which we have of his

nature,

nature, and are included in it; they are all commenſurate with his exiſtence, and ſerve only to denominate the particular *modus* of it.

But it looks as if our author did not ſufficiently underſtand what a *mode* or *property* is, when he obſerves, in the ſame page alſo, "that "the properties of contingent beings muſt be "*contingent*:" as if it was merely accidental *now*, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones, or as if it could ever be otherwiſe after the triangle and right angle were once brought into exiſtence: this is to imply that demonſtration may be altered, (for every thing that is *contingent* may) or elſe, that the ſame demonſtration may be applied to them under any different, accidental circumſtances. And it is plainly repugnant to the principles, which he ſets out with at the beginning, *viz.* that all truths (which muſt belong ſometimes to contingent beings) are abſolutely and independently neceſſary.

To return however to the examination of his 7th and 8th pages—It is agreed on both ſides, that eternity and infinity can be conceived only as *modes* or attributes of the divine nature, and as ſuch, relate not to the *cauſe* or *foundation* of God's

God's exiſtence: and upon a further examination we ſhall find, that we cannot fix any other idea to neceſſity itſelf, but that of a *ſubſequent mode* or of an *antecedent cauſe*; the one of which is inconſiſtent with our author's tenets, and the other is incompatible with the idea, that we have of the Deity; and conſequently, it can in no ſhape, be applied to this doctrine of an *abſolutely neceſſary exiſtence.* For, neceſſity muſt be conſidered under this four-fold diviſion; either *firſt*, as *Logical* *, which immediately connects the predicate with its ſubject, or the thing defined with the property, by which we would define it: or, *ſecondly*, *Moral*, which (ſuppoſing any thing to be intended) expreſſes a connexion between the mediums, that we would make uſe of, and the ends that we purpoſe to accompliſh thereby †: or, *thirdly*, *Phyſical*, which implies a fixt and inviolable connexion between natural cauſes and their

* Neceſſarium Logicum *eſt*, *cui ex terminis repugnat non eſſe. Sic*, *neceſſarium eſt hominem eſſe rationalem.* Chauvini Lexicon Philoſophicum, ad voc. *Neceſſarium.*

† Neceſſarium Morale *eſt id*, *ſine quo*; *quamvis abſolutè fieri poſſit effectus*, *nunquam tamen vel rarò fit*; *ut*, *pedibus laboranti equus eſt neceſſarius ad peregrinandum.* Chauvin. ut ſup.

effects:

effects *: or, *fourthly*, *Metaphyſical*, which imports only immutable exiſtence: that is, it makes the exiſtence of a ſubject an inſeparable part of its eſſence †. This is the moſt comprehenſive diviſion of neceſſity, and the general import of that word. Now let our author pitch upon any one of theſe ſenſes, and we ſhall find that his concluſions will be falſe, if applied to his purpoſe, and contradictory, if reckoned as the *ground* of the divine exiſtance. And

Firſt. Of *logical neceſſity*: now, as this connects the predicate with the ſubject, it muſt preſuppoſe a ſubject, to which the predicate under conſideration is applicable and of which any propoſition that we form about them, is affirmed or denied; and therefore, this ſort of neceſſity muſt be *ſubſequent*. Thus, to inſtance in what moſt immediately concerns our preſent purpoſe: *the exiſtence of God is neceſſary*: here the *exiſtence of God* is the ſubject, and *neceſſity* is predicated of it: if this exiſtence there-

* Neceſſarium Phyſicum *eſt, quod ex cauſis naturalibus tale eſt; ut, neceſſaria eſt eclipſis ſolaris ex interpoſitione lunæ.* Chauvin.

† Neceſſarium Metaphyſicum *eſt, quod immutabiliter exiſtit; ut, Deus.* Chauvin. ut ſup.

fore

fore was not to be conceived as ſomething prior, the neceſſity would at firſt be aſcribed to a meer non-entity, and the propoſiition ariſing from thence would afterwards be formed about a creature only of our own imaginations: whereas, the propoſition only means, as Dr. *Clarke* has explained it, that it is an expreſs contradiction to ſay the contrary: for as all perfections are implied in our general idea of God, to rob him of this, is to incur the abſurdity of including all perfections, and yet of excluding the firſt and chiefeſt. Beſides according to this ſuppoſition, when we firſt introduce neceſſity, we have nothing to apply it to; and when we afterwards do apply it, it is falſely, ſince the exiſtence, which has a beginning, or is poſterior to any thing elſe, cannot, upon that account, be called *neceſſary*. In this caſe therefore, the definition cannot agree with the thing defined; and the idea expreſſed by the word, *God*, will not be what it is, *i. e.* will not be a *neceſſary* ſelf-*exiſtent being*, even while ſuppoſed to be ſo.

Secondly, Of *moral neceſſity*: now, in this we have only a connexion between ſome end propoſed, and the means that are requiſite for the attainment of that end; it implies the intervention

vention of ſome other cauſes, not of itſelf: it is relative, not abſolute: it has a more immediate reference to the manner of the action, than to the nature of the agent: it muſt however be ſubſequent to the exiſtence of the agent, in as much as it relates only to the methods he propoſes to himſelf of accompliſhing his deſign; and does not take place, until his reſolution is formed. So that when in this ſenſe we ſay, *the exiſtence of God is neceſſary*; we do not mean *abſolutely*, but only, that his exiſtence is neceſſary for the production, and his providence for the preſervation of the world, *i. e.* from conſidering the nature and oeconomy of the creation, we gather, that this end could never have been ſo well anſwered, as it is, unleſs ſome omnipotent *Creator* had the management and formation of it; nor confuſion ſo accurately avoided, unleſs an all-wiſe governour has the direction of it. But this is properly the argument *à poſteriori*; and therefore this kind of neceſſity leads him into a train of arguing, which is intirely contradictory to his own tenets, however agreeable it may be to truth.

Thirdly, Of *phyſical neceſſity*: this as it is ſuppoſed to operate after the ſame manner with natural cauſes, muſt be antecedent to the

effect

effect produced; but then it is evident, that this effect, like all others, can only be *temporary*: and therefore, ſeeing it muſt follow and depend upon the cauſe, he will be from hence inevitably forced to defend theſe two abſurdities; 1. that God is dependent, as being an effect; and 2. that he is not the *firſt* cauſe, as being effected by ſomething elſe. *Abſurdities* I call them—for, that one is ſo, is evident from what both parties endeavour to confute, *viz.* the conſideration of an infinite ſeries: and that the other is no leſs abſurd, appears from the ſtructure of every part of the creation, from his own nature, and our idea of of him *. The neceſſity *à priori* denotes the ſame thing with this, and is attended with the ſame conſequences: they are both operative, effective, antecedent; they muſt both be conceived as prior to all exiſtence, not only in the order of our ideas, but of nature alſo.

But it may be obſerved both of *this* and of *moral neceſſity*, that they can neither of them take place, unleſs in the production of created beings; and conſequently, can in no wiſe be

* See this well urged by *Grotius*, *de veritate Chriſt. Relig.* Lib. 1. §. 7.

applicable

applicable to the nature of God, who is ſelf-exiſtent and eternal.

Fourthly, Of *metaphyſical neceſſity*— this preſuppoſes ſome exiſtence, to which the *immutability* that the word *neceſſity* imports, is aſcribed; and in conſequence thereof, it includes independence: this therefore can be only *modal* and *conſequent*. All things that we behold, ſeem to be diſpoſed of arbitrarily, and to exiſt precariouſly: nothing but a bare poſſibility of exiſtence is implied in them, and this being only contingent, we do not look upon it as a neceſſary, but an accidental ingredient of our ideas of them. The whole of their eſſence indeed we my be ignorant of, but we are nevertheleſs certain of what it is not: we know that neceſſity of exiſtence does not belong to them; we can conceive them either not to have been created at all, or to be annihilated afterwards; we conſider them as coming from non-exiſtence, and as liable to loſe the exiſtence, which they now enjoy. But our conceptions of a being abſolutely perfect and ſupreme, muſt riſe higher: in *this*, bare poſſibility or contingency of exiſtence ſpeaks a direct repugnancy to the nature of him: for it is to imply, that though he enjoys all

all perfections in the higheſt degree, yet he may want that, which gives life to all others, *viz.* exiſtence. We cannot indeed penetrate into the inmoſt receſſes of his nature, (for that would be to ſuppoſe a leſſer able to comprehend a greater, a finite being to contain infinity, †) but yet, we can determine both *negatively* and *poſitively* concerning him, that he is not only not ſubject to any change, but alſo infinitely ſuperior to the power of every changer: that his exiſtence is not only not precarious and contingent, but that it is alſo independently immutable, and eternally enduring. This is that permanency of being ſo peculiar to the deity; that perfect manner of exiſtence proper to God only. We conceive him moreover as the fountain of all perfections, and therefore this, which is the *ſubſtratum*

† *Nos finiti ſine contradictione ideam illius infiniti nequimus comprehendere: atque etiamſi animi noſtri facultates indefinitè augeantur, dummodo ta men eandem naturam detineant plures finitas ideas tantum recipiant, ex quibus perfectio Dei formari non poſſet quoniam ex finitis componi nequeat. Si modos ipſius materiæ, et mundi concipere non poſſumus, quomodo naturam authoris ſupremi penetrabimus? ergo,* λέγομεν ὁ μή ἐστιν, ὁ δέ ἐστιν ὃ λέγομεν, *cum de Dei attributis loquimur.* Plotinus. ap. Wollaſton's Nat. Delin.

of

of all the reſt, muſt neceſſarily be included in his eſſence. There is therefore an eſſential connexion between the exiſtence and the ſubject of it, between its exiſtence and its eſſence: that is, in other words, *God exiſts neceſſarily.*—See *Stillingfleet's Origin. Sacr.* Book. 3.

From this explication of the ſeveral kinds of *neceſſity*, it appears, that it is ſo far from countenancing that it evidently contradicts the principles theſe authors would embrace; in as much as it can only mean a *mode* of exiſtence (unleſs they will make it a *phyſical antecedent* cauſe) and is always conſequent thereto. All neceſſity that we know of, as well as all truth, is only *relative*: for when any thing is called neceſſary, the queſtion immediately follows, *neceſſary for what?* a proper ſubject therefore is always ſought for this predicate; a ſubſtance, to which this property (for it is nothing elſe) doth belong.

Accordingly Mr. *Jackſon* has obſerved, that neceſſity is the moſt ſimple, uniform idea, that can be conceived, and as *ſuch*, muſt be referred to ſome external ſubject, of which it is a poſitive *property*: (*Exiſtence and Unity* pag. 15.) and if ſo, it is but a very improper nay an impoſſible foundation to build any exiſtence upon: for before their argument, ſet in this light, can be ſupported it muſt be proved,

that this *subsequent* necessity can become *antecedent*; that the property may exist, before the subject; that our ideas of things may be prior to the things themselves; and that some temporary cause may precede the first, eternal one. Mr. *Jackson* however endeavours to prevert his former reasoning to another use, by maintaining (*pag.* 25.) that this *consequential necessity* (if it be such) will answer the same purpose, as their demonstration *à priori*, since we may from hence, he thinks, as *à priori*, deduce the eternity, infinity &c. which is to suppose, that the effect infers the cause, and not the cause, the effect. It is true indeed, one attribute may be rightly deduced from another, before proved; but what attribute can we pitch upon, from whence we can deduce the *existence* of any being? this is to change the nature of the attribute; it is at first to call it an attribute, without having any thing to ascribe it to; and it is afterwards to consider it under two different inconsistent views, *viz.* as an attribute deduced according to the nature thereof, from something else, and yet as that, from which its own subject, and every thing besides is deducible.

But it seems, notwithstanding all this, that we differ in the acceptation of the word *necessity*,

or at leaſt, in the uſe that we would make of it; our author therefore proceeds.

§. 8. "There are ſome who will readily "allow, that all *truth* is indeed *neceſſary*, "and that God does *neceſſarily* exiſt; and yet "do not ſee that *neceſſity* is therefore the "*ground*, *reaſon*, or *cauſe* of *truth*, or of *God*'s "*exiſtence*; becauſe it is confeſſedly no *author* "or *agent*, and has itſelf no diſtinct exiſt-"ence:—but *cauſe* does not all always imply "*agency*." Pag. 9.

Anſwer: This is not the only objection, that we have to the argument *à priori*; but if it was, I do not perceive that any thing ſatisfactory has been offered in anſwer to it: for ſince our author conſiders this neceſſity as a cauſe, it muſt be either an *efficient* or a *formal* one: but the firſt of theſe is well defined to be that, *quæ per actionem cauſat*, which cauſes by acting, (becauſe every body knows that to effect, is to act;) or elſe, that, *à quâ aliud producitur*, from which ſomething is produced: conſequently, what riſes from ſuch a cauſe is properly called an effect, and muſt be the handy-work of ſome agent; and therefore this will not ſerve his turn. And then, as to a formal cauſe, this, like an internal one, is only

a part, or a partial conception of the thing under consideration; (and accordingly it is defined by certain philosophers to be something implanted in any thing, whereby it is distinguished from another) it therefore presupposes its existence, and so, can never be reckoned as prior to it, or be looked upon as the cause of it *.

Moreover, *cause* is always essentially related to its *effect*: by the very supposition therefore of a cause, something is produced; and where any thing is produced, agency is necessarily implied: unless we will suppose that some mere non-entity is able easily to produce a God, or that a creature of our own imaginations is a sufficient security, on which we may rest the existence and belief of a deity.

§. 9. But there is still a further difference betwixt us, with respect to the signification of the terms, or the nature of the cause they would assign—our author therefore goes on —"nor does *all* existence imply an *author*, though it does indeed require a *cause*." *Pag.* 9.

* *Unaquæque formalis, unaquæque interna causa pars tantum est, et partialis ipsius rei conceptio, quæ ipsam rem præsupponit, ideoque nec illi prior, nec illius causa.* Scotus. in Lib. Sent. *l.* 1. *Dist.* 2.

—but

—but if by *author*, he means (as every one elſe does) one who created or produced any thing; and by *cauſe*, he means that which produces an effect, or that, by virtue whereof any thing is done, and from the intervention of which it proceeds, (which is the moſt common and general definition of it) I cannot ſee how he can ſuppoſe the one without admitting the other, any more than he can imagine an inſtrument to perform any noble ſcheme of art, without the aſſiſting hand of an artificer.—But further, let him fix what ideas he pleaſes to the words, *cauſe*, *author*, and *neceſſity*; yet ſince in every acceptation of them he maintains in general, that all exiſtence requires a cauſe, he will find that this neceſſity alſo, in whatever ſenſe it is taken will alſo ſtand in need of one, that of another, and ſo on without end. We ſhall therefore, in conſequence of theſe principles, bewilder ourſelves in an endleſs ſearch after a firſt independent cauſe, without any hopes of knowing where we may ſtop ſecurely; and indeed without any poſſibility of doing it. Our author indeed will tell us, that we ought to ſtop here: but why ſhould we ſtop here, rather than before? he immediately gives us the

reaſon for it, *viz.* becauſe " *truth* and *neceſ-*
" *ſary exiſtence* muſt be independent of all *will*
" or *agency*; and yet muſt have a *cauſe* or
" *reaſon* of *proportion* or *exiſtence*, even *neceſ-*
" *ſity*." *Pag.* 9. and 42. And ſo alſo Mr. *Jackſon*; here, ſays he, is the *nè plus ultra:* the foundation of this foundation is neceſſity itſelf, which is immutable. *pag.* 39.—which amounts to the ſame thing, as aſſigning neceſſity for a cauſe of itſelf, and making it both cauſe and effect at the ſame time.—Afterwards Mr. *Jackſon* adds, to the ſame purpoſe; " to
" ask what is the foundation of this laſt founda-
" tion, is as abſurd, as to ask what is the efficient
" cauſe of the firſt efficient cauſe:" *Pag.* 40. an abſurdity, which their own reaſoning has led them into, as the conſequence of enquiring after a *cauſe* at all. We reckon God the firſt cauſe, and therefore ſtop here: they grant that he is the firſt cauſe too, and yet enquire after another to ſupport, if not to produce him, but finding that this method of arguing, if purſued, would carry them too far, they relinquiſh the principle, that they at firſt ſet out with, and now maintain, that when we have found out the cauſe of the only uncauſed, and the foundation of the only independent being, we may

may arbitrarily lay this *neceſſity* aſide, as being uſeleſs, if not deſtructive to the truth.—Thus is this argument, *à priori*, introduced as it is carried on with abſurdities, and at length diſcarded unreaſonably: the firſt appears from the idea and nature of God: the ſecond from the conceptions we have of a firſt cauſe; and the laſt from their own principles.

§. 10. But obſerve the dilemma that we are reduced to, if we grant, as we do, that God exiſts *neceſſarily*, in any ſenſe.—"If God does "*neceſſarily* exiſt; either that *neceſſity* of ex- "iſtence is a *conſequence* of exiſtence, and then "*all* things that exiſt, are alſo *neceſſary*; or "the *exiſtence* is a *conſequence* of *neceſſity*: that "is, *neceſſity* is the *cauſe* and *reaſon* of *God's* "*exiſtence*, and of *that* exiſtence only." *The Argument à Priori, &c.* pag. 9, 10.

Anſwer: Neither one nor the other of theſe conſequences is true. For though neceſſity may be the conſequence of God's exiſtence, whom we look upon as eternal and ſelf-exiſtent; yet it cannot, upon that account alone, be aſcribed to thoſe things, which are temporary and contingent. The caſe is vaſtly different between an uncreated being, and created things: neceſſity, in ſome ſenſe, may be applicable to the

one, nay, it is an eſſential ingredient of our idea of him; but it is abſolutely repugnant to the exiſtence and nature of the other. — Nor (what our author takes to be the truth) is the exiſtence a conſequence of neceſſity; for this is to make neceſſity *antecedent* in the order of nature, (which yet, I believe, he would not inſinuate) and prior to the exiſtence of the firſt cauſe.

But enough, he thinks, has been ſaid to eſtabliſh the proof *à priori*, concerning the exiſtence of God; and therefore he next proceeds to ſhew how this argument ſtands with reſpect to his natural perfections.

§. 11. "This argument ſeems to afford the "only proof of the proper and abſolute *eter-* "*nity* of God. Theſe viſible temporary phæ- "nomena, conſidered as the effect of ſome "firſt cauſe, moſt evidently prove the *actual* "exiſtence of their author, in ſome part of du- "ration; nay, ſuppoſing that they conſtantly "need the ſame ſupporting influence, they "prove that their maker does *now* exiſt, and "is at leaſt *coeval* with their duration: and "further, the *actual* exiſtence of this firſt "cauſe, plainly infers that he did *always* exiſt; "otherwiſe

" otherwiſe he could never have exiſted. But " however theſe phænomena may be allowed " to prove his *exiſtence*, they can never poſſibly " be thought to be the *cauſe* or *reaſon* of his " being or duration ; *neceſſity* only, as before, " can be that *cauſe* or *reaſon*, ; and that is ſuf- " ficient *foundation* for the divine *eternity*." Pag. 15.

Anſwer : Here our author may ſeem to have overſhot the mark : even his great maſter, Dr. *Clarke* himſelf diſclaims this reaſoning : for being ſenſible how inconſiſtent his ſcheme was with the conſideration of God's eternity and independency, he has prudently endeavoured to prove theſe attributes by another medium, before he introduces his *neceſſity* ; and accordingly, he has ſufficiently retorted this and the following argument in another part of his works.—It is impoſſible, ſays he, that he who firſt gave to all others beginning ſhould have any beginning himſelf, therefore he neceſſarily has exiſted from eternity ; and he that has always exiſted independently can be deprived of his exiſtence by no one, and therefore will exiſt to eternity. *Dr.* Clarke's *poſthumous Sermons*, Vol. I. pag. 80,

But

But further, if theſe temporary phænomena do prove his exiſtence, and this exiſtence his eternity, as our author himſelf confeſſes, here is the end of our enquiries; (for if we do not ſtop here, as we have ſeen, we can ſtop no where;) we only want a proof of his eternity, which we plainly have got, the cauſe of it, we do not, becauſe we cannot aſſign: for we imagine that it weakens the very belief and foundation thereof; and renders that, which, without a cauſe, might be ſuppoſed and proved to be eternal, to become only temporary: for the intervention of a cauſe is uſeleſs and abſurd, unleſs where there is an effect to be produced; but ſince this implies that the effect is not yet begun to exiſt, we can in this inſtance, have none; we can therefore require no cauſe. But the anſwer to this has been in ſome meaſure anticipated before.

Laſtly, As we are arguing with thoſe, who embrace the belief of a deity, and admit of the divine authority of the holy ſcriptures, we may be allowed to produce an argument from thence alſo which will undeniably confirm the truth of our aſſertion: it is uſed by St. *Paul* in his epiſtle to the *Romans*, chap. 1. ℣. 20. *The inviſible things of him from the creation of the world*

world * *are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head.* Where the apoſtle by a moſt beautiful ſeries ſhews us by what ſteps we may arrive at the proof of the eternal power and di-

* Commentators however, are very much divided in their opinions concerning the ſignification of the word ἀπὸ; ſome (as *Grotius*) taking it to ſignify *à, from*, or *by means of* the creation; and accordingly he produces a ſimilar paſſage from St. *John* chap. 15. ℣. 27. and adds, that the Hebrews alſo underſtand it in the ſame ſenſe, *viz.* מבריאת העולם, *ex creatione mundi*. Others (as *Beza*) obſerve, that only the time of the creation and origin of the world is here declared, *i. e.* ever ſince the world began has God manifeſted himſelf to thoſe, who contemplate the things that are made, as ſays the prophet, *Pſalm* 19. 1. and 145. 4. and St. *Paul*, *Rom.* 1. ℣. 20.---The phraſe ἀπὸ της κτίσεως κόσμυ, (ſays *Whitby*) ſeems not to ſignify the *means*, by which they came to the knowledge of God, for that is afterwards expreſſed in thoſe words, ποιήμασι νοούμενα; but rather to import, that from the beginning of the world the Heathens had theſe means of knowing the true God from the works of the creation.---The plain ſenſe of the whole (ſays the learned, and celebrated Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*) is, that this wiſe and wonderful frame of the world, which cannot reaſonably be aſcribed to any power but God, is a ſenſible demonſtration to all mankind of an eternal and powerful being, that was the author and framer of it. This interpretation is free and natural and every way agreeable to the obvious ſenſe of the words, and the ſcope of the apoſtle's Argument. *Serm.* 112.

vinity

vinity of God, if we will but follow the direction of our own reaſon. Let us, in the firſt place, contemplate the works of the creation (which are here called, *the things that are made*) and we ſhall be from thence led to acknowlege a creator and a providence: and ſince he, who made all things muſt, upon that account, precede every thing that is made, this creator of the univerſe muſt be ſupreme and eternal. Now ſuch is the idea, that we have of God; who without the attributes of eternity and unity, could not be he, who alone created all things, nor he, who alone governs them; and ſo, would neither be independent, nor omnipotent, nor αὐτάρκης, nor finally, *God*. By the things that are made therefore, we clearly perceive the eternal power and godhead of the maker of them *.—And, if any other teſtimony may be thought neceſſary for a farther confirmation of this truth, we may obſerve, that not only St. *Paul*, but alſo all theological writers have conſtantly exploded this proof *à priori* for many centuries upwards, and if the thought be not a new thought, it may however (as the learned Dr. *Waterland* obſerves) be juſtly called a new tenet: and it is certain, that the fathers

* *Beza*, in Locum.

of

of the church, Greek and Latin, never admitted any ſuch proof *à priori* of the divine exiſtence, but either directly or indirectly, either expreſly or implicitly condemned it all along. —See the hiſtorical part of the *Diſſertation* on the argument *à priori*, by a learned hand.

Again, "every *effect* will continue as long "as the *cauſe* of it continues to operate: and "therefore *all contingent* being will endure as "long as *God*, who is the *author* and *cauſe* of "*that* exiſtence *wills* its duration; and there-"fore God himſelf will continue to exiſt as "long as *neceſſity*, which is the *ground* and "*reaſon* of *his* exiſtence, continues to operate; "that is, neceſſarily *for ever*." Pag. 15, 16.

Anſwer: From hence it ſhould ſeem that our author takes the divine exiſtence to be an *effect* of this favourite neceſſity; but an *eternal effect*, he muſt be ſenſible, ſounds altogether as ill as defining morality by ſome particular colour, or this neceſſity by a negation of any. —Beſides, can the parallel be drawn thus far between contingent beings, and the ſelf-exiſtent one? becauſe they are wholly ſubject to the will of their reſpective authors and cauſes, muſt therefore the independent one be dependent upon ſomething elſe? this is to confound contingency

tingency with neceſſity of exiſtence; this is to put the creator and the creation, the cauſe and the effect upon the ſame level.

But it is inſinuated, that this argument is the only ſecurity that we can poſſibly have of the exiſtence of God for the time to come; and accordingly our author obſerves, that as "his "*preſent* exiſtence is abſurd, without *cauſe* or "reaſon, ſo alſo his *future* duration can much "leſs be inferred from his *preſent* exiſtence "without *cauſe* or *reaſon*: for he may full as "probably, the next moment, *ceaſe* to exiſt, "without cauſe or reaſon." *Pag.* 16. And Mr. *Jackſon* aſks how eternity *à parte ante*, can prove that he will *always* exiſt?—which, in truth, is to aſk how we can prove that God, who is in his own nature, *immutable*, may not poſſibly be changed? how an *independent* being can be always ſecure from ſubjection? or, to demand a reaſon, why there may not be a ſucceſſion of *changeable dependent* beings? (for in purſuance of this opinion, Mr. *Jackſon* has defended the poſſibility of an eternal creation, and of an infinite ſeries of dependent beings:) aſſertions which Dr. *Clarke* himſelf has ſufficiently anſwered, in his *Demonſt. Prop.* 2, and which the very ideas of eternity and independency evidently

evidently confute: for the ſafeſt, and indeed the main proof of God's *future* exiſtence is drawn from the conſideration of his own independent nature: if any arbitrary cauſe or reaſon be introduced, its determinations muſt be as arbitrary, and the effects thereof as uncertain: but imagine a being to exiſt, whoſe eſſence and exiſtence exceed the power of every cauſe, and it will be impoſſible to conceive him ſubject to any change, unleſs we can ſuppoſe him to be changed by nothing: that is, unleſs we can admit of an effect (which this change would be) without a competent, or indeed, any cauſe at all.

But a cauſe, it ſeems, there muſt be, or elſe the actual exiſtence of God is abſolutely impoſſible and contradictory; for "if there is really "*no cauſe* or *foundation* of his exiſtence, it is "a demonſtration that he never *did* or *can* "exiſt." *Pag.* 17.—With reſpect to contingencies indeed, (as all effects are) it is demonſtrable, that without a cauſe, they never could have exiſted; but with relation to God, it is only a demonſtration that he never began, and can never ceaſe to exiſt: the one, being created, muſt have a cauſe; the other, being uncreated, can have none. For a cauſe of exiſtence implies

implies imperfection, and where imperfection is, there can neither be eternity nor neceſſity of exiſtence; and therefore in this view alſo, this cauſe or reaſon, of whatever nature it is, is incompatible with the idea of God.

§. 12. Nor, as our author obſerves, "can "we better ſucceed in proving the abſolute "*infinity* of *God*.—This world, and every part "of the univerſe, proves indeed the *actual* ex- "iſtence of ſome firſt cauſe and author in that "part of ſpace, wherein they were produced "or do exiſt; but they cannot be an evidence "even of the *actual* exiſtence of God in any "*other* parts of ſpace; and being themſelves "*finite*, do not therefore infer *infinity*. Much "leſs can they prove the *neceſſary* infinity of "the deity: for thoſe things that themſelves "exiſt by his will and power alone, cannot "poſſibly be conſidered as any *cauſe* or *foun-* "*dation* of *his* exiſtence. The only proof "then of the *abſolute* infinity of God, muſt "be the *neceſſity* of his exiſtence." *Pag.* 17.

Anſwer: This idea of the infinity of the divine nature (which Dr. *Clarke* alſo eſpouſes) ſeems to contradict his moſt ſimple and uniform eſſence, which can have no reſpect either to time or place: for if it could have any relation

lation to this or that place, it would conſiſt of ſeparate parts; and if it conſiſted of ſeparate parts, it would be corporeal and extended. This our author was aware of, and therefore has added another obſervation, in the next page, whereby he would elude the force of this objection. — "Some indeed have thought fit to "deny the *extenſion* even of this *infinite* be- "ing. This is not only an abſurdity in terms, "but amounts plainly to a flat denial of the *ex-* "*iſtence* of God: for I ſee not the leaſt diffe- "rence between exiſting *no where*, and *not* "*exiſting at all.*" Pag. 18.—Now, ſince extenſion, (unleſs when it is applied to meer abſtract ideas, formed by our own minds, ſuch as *ſpace*, *time*, &c.) is uſually defined to be that, which has *partes extra partes*, to talk of the extenſion of God is to aſcribe a body and parts to him; (which yet the firſt *article* of our religion contradicts;) and to ſpeak of his *infinite extenſion*, is to imply (as a learned expoſitor of the articles obſerves *) that he fills all places, and conſequently, leaves no room for the exiſtence of other ſubſtances. If every thing that exiſts, muſt exiſt *ſome where*; let him tell us

* *Welchman* on the XXXIX Articles. *Art.* I. *Not.* 5.

what particular parts of ſpace our own ſouls occupy: whether they are (as ſome have conjectured) equally diffuſed throughout every part of our bodies; or whether (as others hold) they have their principal and immediate reſidence in our *ſenſories*: let him tell us, how thought and extenſion agree together: let him tell us, whether one part takes up more room than another; or whether he does not fall into the abſurdity of the old ſcholaſtic tenet, *totum in toto, & totum in quâlibet parte*; at the ſame time that he would ſeem to maintain that other more plauſible one, θεῖον ἐστι πανταχοῦ ὅλον, μὴ μεμερισμένον. To aſcribe locality to God therefore is to depreſs his nature below that of our own ſouls, and to an equality with that of material objects; which muſt needs appear to be too groſs an apprehenſion of the divine eſſence, and only a meaſuring of *that* by our *own*; inaſmuch as abſolute infinity (ſuch as belongs to God) will not admit of any parts or degrees: for if it does not ſurmount every addition of parts, it is not infinity; and if it does ſurmount them, we can never arrive at an adequate idea of it. Whoever therefore would defend the infinity of God, muſt neceſſarily exclude the conſideration of time and place,

and

and muſt not conceive *eternity*, as compoſed of repeated parts of *duration*, nor *infinity* or immenſity as made up of any number of *finite extenſions*.

What our author further inſinuates (*viz.* that theſe phænomena of nature cannot be the *cauſe* of God's neceſſary infinity) is only playing upon the words, *cauſe* and *neceſſity*: 'tis true, they cannot be the antecedent cauſe of this *effect*, (as he calls it) but they may and muſt be looked upon as a cauſe or reaſon to *us*, although they do not affect *his* nature, or the manner of it: for they plainly point out to us the abſolute neceſſity of ſome firſt cauſe, who is the maker and preſerver of them, otherwiſe they never could have exiſted at all: and when we have got thus far, his infinity will eaſily follow from his own nature, and his other eſſential perfections. Thus, could he be limited by any ſuperior being, he might be liable to be rendered finite; or could he be ſuppoſed capable of any defect, he might be ſuſceptible of finiteneſs too: but ſince theſe are quite repugnant to the nature of a ſupreme, independent, and all-perfect being, (ſuch as we conceive God to be;) to make him finite would require ſome cauſe, but no ſuch cauſe

can be given, and therefore he muſt be infinite.—The reaſon of the ſeveral imperfections, which we obſerve in the creatures is owing wholly to their dependence upon ſome higher cauſe, who created them in what manner and order he thought proper; but that being, which hath its original from itſelf, muſt on that account, be free from thoſe imperfections, which other beings in the world labour under *.

And thus by a plain ſeries of deductions, and from the very nature and idea of God himſelf, we can eaſily gather his infinity, without having recourſe to any *external cauſe*, or any *ſurd neceſſity:* for this is ſo far from ſtrengthening the argument, that it evidently confutes what is intended to be proved by it.

* *Prima cauſa nullâ perfectione orbari poteſt: non aliundè quia quod æternum eſt, ab aliis rebus non pendet, neque quicquam ab illarum actione patitur; neque verò à ſe, quia natura omnis ſuam perfectionem appetit.*

Addendum eſt, eſſe has perfectiones in Deo modo infinito: *attributum cujuſque finitur, aut quia cauſa, per quam exiſtit, tantum nec plus ei communicavit; aut quia ipſa tantum, nec amplius capiebat: Deo autem nulla natura quicquam ſui communicat; nec ipſe aliundè capit quicquam, exiſtens per ſe ſive neceſſariò.* Grotius de Veritat. Chriſt. Relig. *lib* 1. *cap.* 4, 5.—See alſo Bp. *Sillingfleet*'s Orig. Sacr. *B.* 3.

Here

Here is a cauſe aſſigned of the exiſtence of a being: this being, as his exiſtence is reſted upon an *external foundation*, (for this neceſſity muſt be an extrinſick principle, as we have ſhewn before,) can neither be independent nor perfect: what he enjoys, he received from ſomething elſe, which, at firſt, could beſtow upon him juſt what degree of perfection it pleaſed; and to which he has been ever ſince ſo far ſubject as to be liable to be robbed by it, of what he now enjoys. This reaſoning therefore will raiſe in us ſuch an idea of God, as is applicable only to inferior created ſubſtances, which bear the ſame relation to the deity, in their preſent ſituation, as (according to theſe principles) the deity bears to this incomprehenſible *neceſſity*.

And indeed, ſince Dr. *Clarke*'s method of demonſtration is, that "it is impoſſible but "ſomething muſt be infinite *indepently and of* "*itſelf*, otherwiſe it would be impoſſible there "ſhould be any infinite at all, unleſs an effect "can be perfecter than its cauſe," (*Dem. Prop.* 6.) it is evident, from his own words, that the aſſigning of a cauſe will deprive God of this attribute of infinity. For to ſuppoſe an effect (as God's exiſtence muſt be, accord-

ing to their own conceſſions) perfecter than its cauſe, or even equal to it, is abſurd †; and if it is inferior, it cannot be infinite; unleſs he will ſay, that infinity will admit of ſeveral degrees of perfection; which is to affirm, that one abſolutely perfect being may be leſs perfect, than another abſolutely perfect one: which carries in it a manifeſt contradiction.

In the ſame *page* Dr. *Clarke* obſerves, that "to ſuppoſe a finite being to be ſelf-exiſtent, "is to ſay that it is a contradiction for that being "not to exiſt, the abſence of which may yet "be conceived without a contradiction;" and ſo, in like manner, we may obſerve, that to ſuppoſe an infinite being dependent upon any cauſe, is to ſuppoſe him not to be ſelf-exiſtent; and to imagine him not to be ſelf-exiſtent, is to ſay, that that being may poſſibly not exiſt, whoſe non-exiſtence, as being infinite, cannot yet be conceived without a contradiction.

In the ſecond Corollary that he draws from this propoſition, he ſets the immenſity of God in oppoſition to the manner of created things being preſent in ſuch or ſuch places; and yet, he refers this exiſtence to *ſome*; or as infinite,

† See *Baxter's Enquiry into the Nature of the Soul*, Sect. 5.

to

to *all* places; which is, in effect, to declare, that he exiſts after the manner of created, extended ſubſtances; ſince relation to place (or as the ſchoolmen expreſs it, *Relatio aut denominatio ad id, cui quod præſens eſſe dicitur*) would be common to both the one and the other.—So ill does *ſelf-exiſtence* comport with a *foundation*, and *infinity* with a *Cauſe* or *reaſon!*

§. 13. "Another natural perfection of "God, which can alone be proved by this "argument, is the divine *unity*.—The exiſ- "tence of theſe things we converſe with, or "of the univerſe, proves indeed that there is "at leaſt ſome one being, who is the *cauſe* or "*author* of it: and *one only* is neceſſary to ac- "count for theſe phænomena. But this will "by no means prove that they are the work "of *one only* firſt cauſe: for it does not ap- "pear that there may not be *many* firſt cauſes "or authors, *each* of his *own* particular opera- "tions; acting *each* in his *own* ſphere, and *in-* "*dependent* of one another, or otherwiſe." *Pag.* 19.

Anſwer: If our author does not mean to make uſe of the word, *neceſſary*, equivocally, as Mr. *Jackſon* does the word *ſufficient*, con-

founding sufficient *per se*, with sufficient *ad finem aliquem*, (*Existence and Unity*, p. 119) he agrees with us perfectly well in our proof of the divine unity, when we consider God as the sole cause and ultimate end of all things, compleatly framing, and wisely governing the present and all possible worlds with unity of design, and harmony of operation. And as one is as much, as is necessary to be supposed, so is it also as much as ought to be supposed, seeing the regularity and order observable in the creation evidently contradicts the supposition of any more. For if there were many such first causes, it could not but happen that their operations would sometimes interfere with each other, their intentions would be different, their workmanship unequal, and their liberty of acting oftentimes impeded, if not utterly destroyed by each other; all which are the highest derogations imaginable from God's essential perfections of infinite wisdom, power and goodness *.

* —*Si duo essent, aut plures dii, liberé agentes & volentes, possent contraria velle: impediretur autem alter ab altero, quo minus quod vellet efficeret: impediri autem posse Deo indignum est.* Grotius *lib.* 1 *cap.* 3.

But

But theſe conſiderations, however important in themſelves, our author looks upon as trifling and inſignificant: and therefore he proceeds; "How then ſhall we prove and maintain this moſt important article of all true religion? I ſee no evidence but from the argument *à priori*, this does indeed prove it demonſtrably: for if *neceſſity*, conſidered as a *cauſe*, be the *reaſon* and *foundation* of God's exiſtence, all the *effects* of *neceſſity* muſt be infinite." *Pag.* 19.

Anſwer: He has here again unhappily fallen upon an abſurdity of the ſame nature with what we met with before: *viz.* we had then an *eternal*, we have here an *infinite effect*, that is, a perfect and therefore an independent one; that is, ſtrictly ſpeaking, no effect at all: for as every effect muſt be inferior to its cauſe, the evil of imperfection, ſuppoſing any thing to be produced, (which muſt be admitted wherever there is an effect) is neceſſary and unavoidable. This foundation therefore which he has aſſigned for the divine unity is both contradictory and impious. Nay, granting that the effect could be equal with the cauſe, (which conceſſion he has no right to demand of us) yet his concluſion will ſtill be inconſiſtent:

tent: for we ſhould then have two abſolutely perfect beings, even whilſt perfection itſelf excludes the ſuppoſition of more than one †; which this grand agent neceſſity does by no means exclude.

The firſt argument which Dr. *Clarke* offers in the defence of this principle, is, becauſe "neceſſity abſolute in itſelf, is ſimple and uni-"form, without any poſſible difference or va-"riety." But if it is able to produce different attributes, why not different beings too? the Doctor himſelf aſſerts, in his anſwer to the ſeventh letter annexed to his *Demonſtration*, &c. that this ſame neceſſity is the foundation of the divine ſubſtance and of moſt of its attributes ‡, and that conſequently they flow equally from it: if therefore various qualities, which compoſe the ſame ſubſtance (for the ſubſtance is nothing but an aggregate of theſe) can proceed

† *Unus omnium dominus eſt Deus, neque enim illa ſublimitas poteſt habere conſortem, cùm ſola omnem teneat poteſtatem.* Cyprean. de Idol. Van.

Deus vero ſi perfectus eſt, (nam perfectus eſt, ut eſſe debet) *non poteſt eſſe niſi unus.* Lactantius *Div. Inſtit.* lib. 1. cap. 3.

‡ *Moſt of its attributes*, I ſay--- for Dr. *Clarke* juſtly grants that the divine wiſdom and intelligence cannot be demonſtrated by his old argument, *Dem. Prop.* 8.

from

from the ſame neceſſity, whoſe operations muſt, upon this account neceſſarily be various, then various ſubſtances may alſo be aſcribed to the ſame original; and two Gods may be imagined, according to this ſuppoſition, as well as one, and ten thouſand as well as two. The argument therefore muſt prove thus much, if it proves any thing at all to his purpoſe, and if it does proves this, it proves too much.

He adds moreover, that "to ſuppoſe *two* "(or more) *different* natures, exiſting *of* "*themſelves*, neceſſarily, and *independent* from "each other, implies this plain contradiction; "that each of them being independent from "the other, they may either of them be ſup-"poſed to exiſt alone, ſo that it will be no con-"tradiction to imagine the other not to exiſt; "and conſequently neither of them will be "neceſſarily exiſting." *Dem. Prop.* 7.—But this, with ſubmiſſion to ſo great a name, ſeems to be taking a falſe ſtep at the firſt ſetting out: for ſince neceſſity alone from its own nature does not hinder us from ſuppoſing two (or more) neceſſarily exiſting beings, as we have ſeen but juſt now; and ſince, *ex hypotheſi*, they would both of them be eternal and independent, they could neither of them be imagined

gined not to exiſt. Nay, we can carry this point ſtill further; for if he could introduce a foundation for one God, without any warrant for it, we may alſo introduce another foundation for another ſuch being, without producing any authority for that: and thus both the number of Gods and foundations may be increaſed *ad infinitum*. But the whole of this miſtake has ariſen from explaining neceſſity of exiſtence by the impoſſibility of non-exiſtence, that is (contrary to all the rules of good reaſoning,) a *poſitive* idea by a *negative* one.

But this attribute is not to be diſmiſſed yet.—To ſettle it upon the firmeſt foundation, and to take away from us all ſcruple about it, they have added a third argument, which as they imagine, muſt needs appear to be convincing and concluſive.—"It is abſurd (ſays our au-"thor) to ſuppoſe *two* infinite ſpaces, or *two* "eternities; for they muſt neceſſarily *coincide*; "and ſo the exiſtence of God being *neceſſary* "*truth*, *neceſſity* cannot be the *cauſe* or *foun-*"*dation* of *two exiſtences*, but of *one* only; for "this plain reaſon, becauſe *one* exiſtence, cauſed "by *neceſſity*, muſt be *infinite* every way, or,

"as

"as it were, contain *all* neceſſary being." *Pag.* 20.—And to the ſame purpoſe Dr. *Clarke*, "No other nature can be ſelf-exiſtent, becauſe "ſo it would be individually the ſame, at the "ſame time that it is ſuppoſed to be different." *Demon. ut ſup.*—And indeed, thus far their argument will hold good, that upon this ſuppoſition, there would be no *ſpecific difference*, which might characterize or diſtinguiſh the one from the other, but there would even then be manifeſtly a *numerical diſtinction*; ſo that although they would be, in the former ſenſe, but as one, yet would they be, according to the latter, in number two; for ſpecific coincidence will never infer numerical unity.—And accordingly, we may obſerve, by the bye, that, in the great and myſterious doctrine of the Trinity, at the ſame time that we are forbidden, with the *Arians*, to *divide the ſubſtances*, we are forbidden alſo, with the *Sabellians*, to *confound the perſons*.—But it is not proper to enlarge further upon this point here: whoever deſires to ſee a full explanation of theſe articles, may conſult Dr. *Waterland*'s learned hiſtory of the *Athanaſian* Creed, *chap.* 10, and the *Appendix*.

Thus

Thus much may ſuffice in anſwer to their arguments.—If we next enquire into the authority that we have for our own principles, we ſhall find that they ariſe from the received articles of our Chriſtian Faith: for that this doctrine of the unity is included in the firſt article of our creed, *I believe in God*, is apparent, not only becauſe the *Nicene* Council ſo expreſſed it by way of expoſition, but alſo, becauſe this creed in the churches of the Eaſt, before the council of *Nice*, had that addition in it, *I believe in* ONE *God*. And that this unity was intended to be deduced from arguments *à poſteriori* only, is evident from the following words, *maker of heaven and earth:* whereby we underſtand the manner in which he has thus manifeſted himſelf to be the *one*, eternal, almighty God, *viz.* by the works of the creation *. Several texts of ſcripture alſo might eaſily be produced to the ſame purpoſe, but

* See the unity well proved by the learned Biſhop *Pearſon*, in his expoſition of this article, 1. From the nature of God. 2. From his government of the world, in which we meet with no confuſion or diſorder. *P.* 23. And *Grotius* makes uſe of the ſame arguments, *de Verit. Chriſt. Relig.* Lib. 1. cap. 3.

every

every one's own obſervation muſt render this needleſs.

§. 14. Our author next proceeds " to ſhew " by this argument, that God is neceſſarily an " *agent*. Now this *firſt* and *neceſſary* being, " or *author* and *cauſe* of all other being, muſt " be an *agent* in this production, or elſe the " *contingent* being will be a *neceſſary* effect of " this *neceſſary* being, even while it is yet con- " feſſed to be *contingent*, which is abſurd. " and if he be an *agent*, *neceſſity*, as it is the " *cauſe* and *foundation* of his *nature* and *exiſtence*, " muſt alſo be the *ground* of his *agency*. All " *agency*, eſſentially implying *ſelf-motion* and " *activity*, is *perfect*." Pag. 21, 22, 23.

Anſwer: A ſtrange contradiction this! that the very eſſence of agency ſhould conſiſt in perfect freedom, and yet be founded at laſt on abſolute neceſſity. According to this, the ſtronger the neceſſity is, the more extenſive is the power of the agent, and yet, the leſs the reſtraint, the more perfect the agency. A moral neceſſity, (whereby we underſtand only the unerring rectitude of the divine will, which determines him always to do that, which is beſt upon the whole,) may comport with the greateſt

greatest liberty and the freest action, but to talk of the *physical, absolute necessity of agency*, (which his words must mean, if they mean any thing) is altogether as inconsistent, as a *necessary freedom*, or a *free necessity*. And indeed, thus much is evident from his own words in another place: for if this necessity, as he grants, *page* 30, cannot be applied to the moral perfections of God, because these depend upon his *will*, it is certain, that neither can it be applied to his agency, which is only freedom or indifference of will.

Nor was this concession extorted from him without good reason: for the absurdity of applying this necessity to the present purpose is evident from the most common way of observation and reasoning that we are acquainted with. — When we turn our eyes towards the brute creation, we may perceive that all their actions, if they may be called actions, are directed by one constant, uniform rule: *nature* (by which is meant blind fate or necessity) is their sole guide: *instinct* (which is only external, and, as some conjecture, the immediate direction and guidance of divine wisdom, to supply the place of reason, which they want) is their supreme director and governor: and accordingly

ingly we find, that all mankind agree in not aſcribing any merit to them for good actions, nor imputing any crime or fault to them for bad ones: they ſeem to move their bodies indeed, but it is in conſequence of ſenſation only, or of being firſt acted upon, ſeeing they have not ſo much as the principle of action within themſelves. And according to our author's tenets, we might run the parallel between this inferior part of the creation, and the creator himſelf: the ſame powers (or rather the ſame want of power) would be found in both: the ſame external principle of action would command and govern both. The end of the creation therefore would be perverted; the wiſdom and goodneſs of the creator, manifeſted thereby, would be deſtroyed: we ſhould have no one to thank for what good we enjoy; no one to blame for any miſery that we may ſuffer; for there would be a neceſſity laid upon God, whoſe authority he could not reſiſt; a power over his will, which he could by no means oppoſe. We need not then be fearful for what is paſt, nor ſollicitous about what is to come; for neither our virtues (if we had any) could be rewarded, nor our vices puniſhed, unleſs this ſupreme agent, *neceſſity*, has before ordain-

ed it. So that the *Hobbiſt* would now no more dread the thoughts of ſinning, becauſe the *Leviathan* will chaſtize him for it; nor the good Chriſtian fear to tranſgreſs the rules of juſtice and equity, becauſe it is contrary to the will of God; but every moral duty would be ſet upon a different footing; and reckoned *ſuch*, becauſe neceſſity enjoins it, and its abſolute power and authority enforces it. Thus would the deity be rendered ſubject to an unknown, unguided principle; and we ſhould ſtill be at a loſs for one, whom we might properly reckon either the author, or preſerver of the univerſe; for one, wherein action and power might ſubſiſt, even when we have arrived at the knowlege of a being, who appears to be the fountain of all action and power: which is the greateſt abſurdity in the world.

That the ſelf-exiſtent being therefore is not a blind, unintelligent neceſſity, but in the moſt proper ſenſe an underſtanding, active being, is a truth that cannot be denied, and yet cannot be demonſtrated ſtrictly and properly *à priori*, as Dr. *Clarke* with a great deal of reaſon grants, *Prop.* 8: for how abſolute neceſſity can be in any wiſe reconcileable with perfect freedom, is hard to conceive.—But yet, why ſhould not this

this neceſſity extend to all the operations, the will and decrees, as well as the exiſtence of the firſt cauſe; and take away that freedom of determination, that entire liberty of indifference, which is an indiſputable property both of God and man?—If he can admit of it in one caſe, why ſhould he not in the other?—The conſequence indeed ſeems to be plain enough, but becauſe the very nature and idea of neceſſity is directly repugnant to that of freedom, and conſequently of agency, therefore he has granted that theſe two can never be co-exiſtent in one and the ſame cauſe. But it ſeems to be equally repugnant alſo to the idea of independence, which excludes the ſuppoſition of any reaſon or foundation, and therefore, neither can theſe two be co-exiſtent in one and the ſame ſubject. I think we might go on, and obſerve the ſame thing of all the other divine attributes: the conſideration therefore, which induced the learned Doctor to explode this argument in one inſtance, ought to have prevailed with him to have exploded it in others, or rather, not to have introduced it at all.

But the agency of the divine nature is ſo conſpicuous in the diſpoſition of every thing in the *natural*, and in the conſtitution of the *moral*

world, that whoever pretends to ſearch for any further evidence thereof, endeavours only *magno conatu magnas nugas agere.*—The beginning of motion, the arbitrary diſpoſition of indifferent things, the finiteneſs of all created beings, their qualities, number, and magnitude, together with the powers obſervable in our own compoſition, do all conſpire to evince this great truth. (I need only mention theſe arguments, they being moſt of them learnedly and fully handled by Dr. *Clarke*, *Prop.* 8, 9.) and if we conſider the *moral* part, we ſhall find, that if the acts of beneficence and goodneſs in God were not the free acts of his will alone, all men muſt be made as happy and as good, as they were capable of being, not only upon their firſt exiſtence in the world, but as long as they ſhall continue, by a meer neceſſity of nature, without the intervention of God, or the actions of men. For ſince it is evident, from the moral attributes of God, that the ſole end of the creation was the communication of happineſs to mankind, to ſuppoſe this happineſs leſs than infinite, when the cauſe thereof, (upon the principle of *fate* and *neceſſity*) requires it to be ſo, is to ſuppoſe the effect inadequate to the deſign of that cauſe, whoſe counſels and operations

rations nevertheleſs can be ſubject neither to limitation nor reſtraint: ſo that if he intended to make them happy, they muſt be perfectly ſo; or if he was able to make them good, in any meaſure, (which, I ſuppoſe, will not be queſtioned,) they muſt be ſo, in an infinite degree.

§. 15. " All *knowledge* relates to *truth* and " *fact*, there being no other objects of the ſenſe " or underſtanding. Now all *fact*, except on- " ly that *neceſſary* fact of God's exiſtence, be- " ing the meer production of the will of God, " cannot but be known to him.—Any *degree* " of intelligence in nature, proves intelligence " to be in the firſt author of all things. As " ſurely therefore as there is *any* idea of truth " in *any* mind, ſo ſurely is the origin of *all* in- " telligence in the *divine* mind. *Our* under- " ſtandings, as well as *our* exiſtence, and all " other *our* capacities, are neceſſarily *limited* " by the will of our maker: but the under- " ſtanding of *God* muſt be neceſſarily *infinite*; " becauſe *this*, as all the other *natural* perfec- " tions of the deity, is founded on *neceſſity*, " which cannot be the cauſe or reaſon of any " *partial* and *limited* intelligence, but extends " neceſſarily to *all* truth." *Pag.* 23, 24.

Anſwer: Theſe paſſages give us reaſon to conjecture that our author began here to find himſelf preſſed with difficulties, which he could not ſurmount, and thronged with abſurdities, which he could not avoid: for they ſeem to be only made up of the two oppoſite kinds of arguments, the one of which he was ſenſible would anſwer the proper purpoſe beſt, but the other muſt be introduced to ſerve his own turn. —When we contemplate the powers and faculties of our own minds, (which power of contemplation alone, ſo viſible in every one of us, clearly proves what we intend to infer from it,) we cannot but perceive that every thought, reflection, and obſervation ariſes from ſome degree of knowledge, which is implanted in us: we perceive moreover that this is a perfection of our nature, and that it was communicated to us by ſome other hand; (for if it was inherent in, or eſſential to our being, it would be equally perfect in all) and ſince every cauſe muſt neceſſarily exceed its effect, not only in kind but alſo in degree, this other, from whom we received it, muſt enjoy this perfection in a more compleat manner, than we do; or, if he did not receive it from another ſuperior to himſelf, in the higheſt degree poſſible. Now, it

is

is certain that we can aſcribe the original thereof to no other being, but to the common benefactor and creator of the univerſe; who, as he is infinite, contains all perfections in himſelf; and as he is independent and ſupreme, can ſuffer no limitation from others; this Attribute of *knowledge* therefore muſt be found in him in an infinite degree, and in its utmoſt extenſiveneſs.

This is what we properly call the argument *à poſteriori*.—The ſame method of reaſoning we alſo meet with in the juſtly celebrated Eſſay of Mr. *Locke*.—A man finds in himſelf *perception* and *knowledge*. There was a time then, when there was no knowing being, and when knowledge began to be; or elſe, there has been alſo a *knowing being from eternity*. If it be ſaid, there was a time when no being had any knowledge, when that eternal being was void of all underſtanding: I reply, that then it was impoſſible there ſhould ever have been any knowledge, it being as impoſſible that things wholly void of knowledge and operating blindly, and without any perception, ſhould produce a knowing being, as it is impoſſible, that a triangle ſhould make itſelf, three angles bigger than two right ones. For it is as

repugnant to the *idea* of ſenſeleſs *matter*, that it ſhould put into itſelf ſenſe, perception, and knowledge, as it is repugnant to the *idea* of a triangle, that it ſhould put into itſelf greater angles than two right ones.—See *Lock*'s *Eſſay on Human Underſtanding*, Book 4. chap. 10.

And what ſtill more confirms this argument is, that the wiſeſt men of all ages have not been able to form in their minds any idea of God, but by induction from what we diſcover in ourſelves: to each kind of which perfections we join *infinitude*, and what is a faculty in the human ſoul, becomes an attribute in God; and ſo by putting them together in one being, we form our idea of the great ſovereign of the univerſe. See *Spectator*, N°. 531.

All that has hitherto been ſaid comes up to the firſt part of the quotation from our author: and thus far he had proceeded very right in the way of arguing *à poſteriori*; but then at laſt this neceſſity muſt be ſlipped in upon us; the idea we began with is changed for another altogether new and foreign, and uſhered in only under the cover of an ambiguous name. Blind neceſſity muſt, at laſt, be the ground of this divine and perfect knowledge; omniſcience muſt be ſubjected to an unintelligent chimera.—

As

As our author has applied neceſſity to this attribute in the ſame manner that Dr. *Clarke* does to the other divine attributes (though in this, he diſclaims it) let us put his reaſoning into the Doctor's method, which no doubt he allows of in other caſes, and ſee how far it will appear concluſive in that view. Thus, the idea of omniſcience is ſo cloſely connected with that of ſelf-exiſtence, that becauſe it is impoſſible but ſomething muſt be omniſcient *independently and of itſelf*, therefore it muſt of neceſſity be ſelf-exiſtent; and becauſe ſomething muſt of neceſſity be ſelf-exiſtent, therefore it is neceſſary that it muſt likewiſe be omniſcient.—Now, from whence is the neceſſity of this omniſcience, or indeed of any knowledge at all, gathered, if we overlook the conſideration of theſe effects, which alone declare it? or, whence ariſes the ſtrict connexion between ſelf-exiſtence and omniſcience, unleſs we underſtand by ſelf-exiſtence, the poſſeſſion of all perfections, of which knowledge muſt be one? which, without firſt taking in ſome other mediums of demonſtration, whereby we prove the exiſtence of ſuch an all-perfect being, is only a begging of the queſtion.

§. 16.

§. 16. "All *power* ſuppoſes *agency*. Now "that God has *all* power, or that nothing *has* "exiſted, does or *can* exiſt but by his power "and agency, is evident from his being the "*only* cauſe and author of all things; but *theſe* "phænomena, or *this* univerſe which we ſee, "or imagine to exiſt, will prove no more "power in God than is *ſufficient* to have pro- "duced *them*, and to continue *them* in being.— "But if we apply the argument *à priori*, and "make *neceſſity* the *ground* and *reaſon* of his "power, as of his *exiſtence* and all his other "*natural* perfections: *ſome* power being neceſ- "ſary to the exiſtence of *any contingent* being; "and *contingent* exiſtence being plainly *poſ-* "*ſible*, as well as, by all the demonſtration of "our ſenſes, a *reality*; no reaſon can be given "why *neceſſity* ſhould be the *ground* and *foun-* "*dation* of *any* power, that will not equally "prove it to be abſolutely *almighty* power "throughout *all ſpace*, and throughout *all du-* "*ration*."—Pag. 25, 26.

Anſwer: If the exiſtence and other attributes of God ſtood in need of neceſſity for their ſupport, his being might be uncertain, and his eſſential perfections limited. The power of creating, or of making things out of nothing muſt

muſt be infinite, for it is plain that nothing can reſiſt it: but this power is immediately included in our idea of God; and therefore it is evident, that if he is the only cauſe and author of all things, he muſt, on that account, be neceſſarily omnipotent: for he who can give being with a thought, and annihilate it with another, is not only free from controul, but enjoys all poſſible power in its utmoſt perfection. But what if the creation of theſe finite things did not immediately infer infinity? yet, if we aſcribe their origin to an independent cauſe, one, who could proceed from nothing, and is ſuperior to every thing, we ſhall find, that he muſt be undoubtedly omnipotent, or we ſhall, by denying it, run ourſelves into the old abſurdity of imagining him ſubject to limitations, where no limiter can be admitted, that is, we ſhall conceive an effect, without being able to aſſign any cauſe.—We have before ſhewn how ill neceſſity comports with the idea of agency; and ſince, as our author ſays, one ſuppoſes the other, (for power without the liberty of exerting it, is, in truth, no power at all) what has been already ſaid upon that head, will be equally applicable to the preſent purpoſe; for both theſe attributes (*viz.* independency and omnipo-

omnipotence) muſt ſtand or fall together. If neceſſity therefore will effectually reſtrain all liberty, it will as fully reſiſt all power: ſo that the *neceſſity of power* will be as contradictious in terms, as a *weak omnipotence*, or an *omnipotent weakneſs*.

Indeed, God's omnipotence is ſo much diſplayed, and is ſo conſpicuous both in the formation and preſervation of the univerſe, that men have not only not denied it, but have rather been apt to run into the other extreme, and to ſtretch it ſo far, as to imagine it poſſible for an almighty God to work even contradictions. Accordingly, it has been induſtriouſly applied by the *Papiſts* to that favourite doctrine of their's *Tranſubſtantiation*; confidently aſſerting, that it is by no means impoſſible for omnipotent power to effect, that the ſame body may be in ten thouſand places at the ſame time; and enjoying the pleaſures of heaven, at the ſame inſtant that it is tortured with the croſs on earth.—But ſuch a power as this, is indeed no power at all.

I have now gone through the moſt material conſiderations that theſe authors have offered in defence of the argument *à priori*. I have carefully examined the ſtrength of all their reaſoning,

reaſoning, which I have propoſed in as clear a light, as their own words have ſet it in; but have purpoſely omitted the intricate and perplexing controverſies concerning the reality or non-reality of *ſpace* and *time*, as being inſignificant in themſelves and irkſome to the reader. —And after all, it muſt be confeſſed, as the learned Archbiſhop *Tillotſon* obſerves, that "there is indeed hardly any thing more incon-"ceivable to us, than how a thing ſhould be "of *itſelf*, and *without a cauſe* of its being; "and yet our reaſon compels us to acknow-"lege this: becauſe we certainly ſee that "ſomething is, which muſt either have been "of itſelf and without a cauſe, or elſe ſome-"thing that we do not ſee muſt have been "of itſelf, and have made all other things; "and by this reaſoning we are forced to ac-"knowlege a deity, as the principle and firſt "cauſe of all things."—Nor muſt we expect to comprehend every thing, much leſs the *hidden things* of God: human underſtanding will not reach thus far; and the nature and manner of God's exiſtence will not admit of it: why then ſhould we ſeek for *demonſtration*, where *conviction* alone is ſufficient? or why pretend to find out antecedent principles, when we have

once

once arrived at the *nè plus ultra?* the moſt auguſt idea of the deity is ſet forth in the works of nature in the ſtrongeſt images, and moſt emphatical language; and the ſublimeſt truths are thereby rendered familiar to an attentive mind: we need therefore go no farther than our own ſelves to aſcertain the exiſtence of the divine being; nay, the more we endeavour to deduce it from other evidences, the more uncertain and ignorant we are of it.

I mean not however to derogate from the amiable character, which the illuſtrious Dr. *Clarke* has juſtly acquired by his uncommon abilities and extenſive learning; whoſe natural talents, improved by a conſtant and judicious application, rendered him the light of our nation, and the ornament of our religion: but every one, I think, will readily agree with me in this, that when truth is ſought after with a ſincere and faithful endeavour, neither the authority of any *great name* ought to biaſs us, nor the contending for *received principles* alone ought to pervert our judgments. This is not to call the learning and wiſdom of others in queſtion, but only impartially to weigh the truth of things in an exact ballance. And if we find the greateſt maſters of reaſon are not

always

always in the right, it is but candidly to reflect, *humanum eſt errare.*

But leſt it ſhould be ſaid, notwithſtanding all this, that *God had*, in any reſpect, *left himſelf without witneſs*, where natural reaſon fails us, there divine revelation ſteps in to our aſſiſtance, a revelation ſo exactly conformable to the moſt juſt and magnificent conceptions of the divine nature, that whoever can ſuffer himſelf to contemn or neglect the noble ſentiments contained in it, muſt either be ſo fooliſh, as not to underſtand when conviction is offered to him; or ſo profane and ſceptical, as to be unwilling to receive it.—I believe it might eaſily be made appear, that every one of God's attributes, as manifeſted by the works of the creation, is expreſly delivered to us in theſe *Holy Oracles:* but this ſubject deſerves a fuller and more exact diſcuſſion, than my intended brevity will permit me to give it.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 26. lin. penult, for *Clarke*, read *Cudworth*.
28. lin. 8. for *eternal*, read *external*.
Ib. lin. 7. Not. for *acknowlege*, read *acknowleging*.
29. lin. 7. Not. for ὅδα, read ὅσα.
32. lin. 9. for *the*, read *our*.

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